SECRET SOCIETIES IN LATIN AMERICAN LITERATURE:

POSITIONING THE INTELLECTUAL ELITE

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Secret Societies in Latin American Literature: Positioning the Intellectual Elite

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Abstract

In the literary and intellectual work of writers from Mexico and Argentina—specifically, Macedonio Fernández, Jorge Luis Borges, Alfonso Reyes, and Octavio Paz—I examine the role of hermetic communities. I argue that the narratives about these groups reveal obscured features of the circles in which these writers participated. In their narratives, they delineate strategies that a secret society, a group of conspirators, a brotherhood, or an avant-garde of intellectuals follows as it seeks to create a new order, to foster cultural hegemony, and/or to conspire against political regimes. The model of these organizations functions as a self-referential imaginary entity that informs the actual formation of intellectual elites in the region. The narratives themselves reflect esoteric knowledge, oaths, and rituals of initiation while revolving around still more clandestine concepts, such as the secret, the sacred, and sacrifice. As the textual structure resonates with the structure of the writers' closed organizations, it also sheds light on their ideological and political perspectives on society at large and on the power of the State that they aim to undermine or defend. I also particularly study the exchange of ideas that existed between Latin American writers and Roger Caillois, a founding member of the *Collège de Sociologie* (1937-1939), a research center in Paris devoted to the study of restricted communities. In addition, I analyze the connections with other European sources, both literary and cultural traditions, which affected the formation and dynamic of intellectual elites in the region, and the formation of literary and non-literary discourses about closed communities.

Biography

Federico Fridman graduated from the Political Science major at the University of Buenos Aires in 2004. Before he came to Cornell University in 2007 to complete his post-degree studies, he was a teaching assistant for courses on political theory at the Law School and in the Department of Political Science at the University of Buenos Aires. He also participated in the program that the university conducts at Devoto Federal Prison, in which he taught a course for inmates who pursue a degree in Law. He published articles on theory and literature in academic journals in Argentina. At Cornell, he taught Spanish language courses, advanced writing and conversation courses in Spanish and conducted a workshop for students taking a course on Mexican history in the History Department as part of the Program for Foreign Languages Across the Curriculum at Cornell. He also taught the undergraduate survey courses required for the Spanish Major in Latin American Literature and Spanish Peninsular Literature. He also participated in a public outreach program that the university conducts at Auburn Correctional Facility, for which he designed and taught a course on Latin American literature oriented toward Hispanic and heritage Spanish-speaking inmates. He has published articles on literature in international journals and book editions, and has submitted other articles for publication, which are currently under peer-review.

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Introduction

The Bolshevist Revolution in Russia in 1917 proved that the formation of a vanguard group, which functioned as a closed cadre existing on a plane above the proletarian movement and which conspired to overthrow the Czarist Regime, was an effective strategy with which to intervene in history and provoke major changes. The echoes of the Bolshevists' experience resound around the world and reach Buenos Aires, where they inspire a new generation of avant-garde intellectuals, the young Jorge Luis Borges prominent among them, during the 1920s. This group of intellectuals, who are seeking to intervene in their milieu and engender a transfiguration of abstract ideas into real change in the material world, emulates the model of the secret society. These young Argentinean writers believe that a restricted community of avant-garde intellectuals could make the multitudes think through art. They face the question that will haunt the following generation of Latin American intellectuals: how to bridge the gap between the ideal and the real to effectively impact the material world.

In the Latin American context, José Enrique Rodó provides through his book, *Ariel* (1900), the model for the formation of a selective minority of intellectuals and for their interventions in society at large.[1] In Mexico, a young group of intellectuals, among them Alfonso Reyes, embody this model to challenge the traditional cultural, literary and educational institutions, during the first decades of twentieth century. They form a closed group of intellectuals that cuts its ties with the community of intellectuals at large to establish alternative

[1] Bruno Bosteels writes that this model consists in: "[u]n grupo minoritario, foco o vanguardia de los intelectuales quiere 'hacer pensar' a la muchedumbre a través del arte. Gracias a la imaginación, las ideas entonces pretenden tener el poder de transformar el mundo" [a minority group, a *foco* or avant-garde of intellectuals that aims to make the multitude think through arts. Hence through ideas they aspire to have the power to transform the world] (61). See Bosteels. "'Así habló Próspero': La eficacia de la ideología en el modernism hispanoamericano."

sources of knowledge that invest them with the authority to question the old generation of intellectuals. The young writers seek to reshape their cultural milieu, set a new role and function for the intellectuals, and displace the old intellectual elite. They envision that they could assume a leading a role in providing the values that should then structure the cultural milieu and guide the collective life of society.

The social, economic, political and cultural contexts in Argentina and Mexico in which young generations of intellectuals challenge the previous generations are different. While in Argentina the young writers, during the 1920s, question the dominant figure of Leopoldo Lugones and the *modernista*' literary aesthetic, in Mexico the young group of intellectuals, heading to the Mexican Revolution in 1910, faces the hegemony that positivist intellectuals, who are the organic intellectuals of the *porfirian* regime, impose on the cultural milieu and educational institutions. In Argentina the young writers bear witness to the consolidation of a modern state that is beginning to be supported by a more democratic base. In Mexico the new generation of intellectuals observes, during the revolutionary process, how the old fort of positivist intellectuals crumbles, and some of them envision their new role in the formation of the new social and political order. In spite of these fundamental differences between the two countries, around the centenary of the Wars for Independence fought in 1810s, the intellectuals' position and function in society at large are inscribed in a regional process of modernization, mainly in the urban capitals, and in a process of professionalization of the role of the writers, who become more receptive to international cultural trends, ideas and literary aesthetics.

The professionalization and specialization of writers in Latin American responds to the division of labor and the fragmentation of society that characterize the regional modernization since the turn of the century. This specialization of labor delineates the field in which men of

letters circumscribe their intellectual production, while new disciplines in the humanities form historians, sociologists, economists, and political scientists, that then provide their expertise for understanding social, eco and political dynamics and conceiving public policies. However, in *Ciudad Letrada*, Anger Rama claims that this does not imply that writers withdrew to ivory towers. On the contrary, even though there is a professionalization of the role of the writer, he asserts that intellectuals continued participating in the public political arena and seeking to intervene in the cultural formation of society at large. Rama asserts that Rodó extends the idea, which was a shared conviction among liberal thinkers in the nineteenth century, that intellectuals and writers "son […] quienes mejor entienden de asuntos politicos y de los negocios públicos de las sociedades" (109) [are those who better understand about politics and the societies' public business].* In the 1910s and 1920s, with different degrees of engagement, writers are involved in politics, and through their intellectual and literary productions aim to address social, cultural and political issues.

Writers and intellectuals believed that they had to provide the spiritual values that should guide the collective life. Thus Rama argues that they exerted a "*función ideologizante*" [*ideologizing function*] a position that new generations of intellectuals will also assume (110). They believed that this position was opposed to the bourgeoisie's philistinism. Although intellectuals persevered in their attempt to be always close to the centers of power, which supports certain factions of intellectuals, while preventing the development of others, they believed that they represented a higher ethic and moral than the miserable values that characterize politics. Intellectuals believed that they were the "nuevos sacerdotes de la humanidad" [new clerics of humanity] (111). Nevertheless, they did not open their "churches" to

* Unless otherwise indicated, translations are mine.

educate the common people. Instead they focused on the formation of new exclusive and closed cadres of intellectuals.

As the modernization process slowly fosters the emergence of a middle class, young intellectuals coming from this social strata struggle to gain access to the exclusive circles of intellectuals. Rama claims that these young intellectuals' aims reflect the formation process of an incipient middle class, which has started to mature a consciousness of itself. The confrontation between the new generation and previous generation of intellectuals escalates, as do the struggles among the intellectuals elites already established at the center of the cultural milieu. The power of the state consolidates and grants more financial supports to the political party and the people working for the government. This support also reaches the intellectual elites, since its members find positions in educational institutions, the diplomatic body, and the public administrations. Thus the antagonism among the different factions of intellectuals is exacerbated, as they are fighting for more power and recognition with which to impose their cultural hegemony.

The young generations of intellectuals start to conceive their assault on the center of power that structures the cultural milieu. They conspire to displace the dominant intellectual elites and redirect the role, function and position of artists and intellectuals in society at large. Rama asserts that they seek a reconfiguration of political forms, rather than a radical rupture with previous cultural and political institutions. The Mexican Revolution in 1910 and the Hipólito Yrigoyen presidency in 1916 in Argentina, in spite of the fundamental differences of these political experiences, provoke profound social changes that place the masses at the center of the political arena and open new spaces for the aspirations of the young generation of intellectuals. Rama writes that then,

> [a] diferencia de lo que ocurriera cien años atrás, durante la Emancipación, tanto el cambio proyectado como la recomposición de la ciudad letrada, son visualizados ahora a través del partido político, reemplazando el sistema de logias y cenáculos de la Independencia. La directa consecuencia de la politización que sufre la ciudad será una nueva concepción funcional del partido político, con ampliación de efectivos y una base democrática que no conocieron los partidos del siglo XIX, la cual seguirá rigiendo todo el siglo XX hasta que en las últimas décadas reaparezca el antiguo régimen de logias, ahora como núcleos militarizados (focos) que ya tendrán que abocarse a una teorización justificativa pues modifica costumbres ampliamente establecidas y aceptadas […]. (143-144)
> [unlike what happened a hundred years ago, during the Emancipation, both the projected reforms and the reconstruction of the lettered city, are now envisioned through the political party, replacing the lodges and cenacles systems of the Independence. The direct consequences of the politicization that affects the city will be a new conception of the political party's function, with an expansion of its members and the foundation of a democratic base that was unknown for political parties in the XIX century. This base will continue ruling along the XX century until its last decades when the old regime of lodges, now as militarized cores (*focos*), reemerges again and will have to focus on a theorization that justifies them, since they modify costumes thoroughly established and accepted].

The political party becomes the means to achieve power, because it is conceived by intellectuals that the only way to transform society at large is through the state apparatus. The democratic

participation of the people legitimizes a state that no longer represents the interests of the oligarchy, but the common good. However, some institutions become even more authoritarian and political structures more rigidified.

Rama provides the concept of "autoritarismo democrático" [democratic authoritarianism] to define the new institutions, which, nonetheless, still project the ideal of democracy to replace the aristocratic tone that characterized the state during the previous century (145). He points out that the members of the intellectual elites assume two positions, which also interact with one another. On the one hand, they tend to continue in an aristocratic position. They seek to stay close to the political power and keep designing public and cultural policies that only address their personal ideas and interests in ruling the collective life. On the other hand, they become more involved in the conception and construction of new political structures, and more engaged with democratic political parties. Therefore there is a transition from the small circle of aristocratic intellectuals to an expanded circle that incorporates middle class intellectuals who, although they still claim aristocratic values for the circle of intellectuals, are also more inclined to embrace democratic values.

Nevertheless, Rama leaves a hiatus, as he is mapping the historical position of intellectual elites in Latin America. He claims that, during the 1920s and 1930s, the intellectual elites abandon the system of lodges and cenacles, and the revolutionary avant-gardes will only later recuperate it, during the 1960s and 1970s, in the form of clandestine armed organizations. My research begins precisely in this gap. In Mexico and Argentina, since the 1910s and 1920s, some writers and intellectuals give continuity to a system of restricted communities and secret societies, which not only stems from the previous similar experiences in Latin American of masonic lodges and the theosophical society, but also emulates international contemporary

trends, tactics and strategies that avant-garde groups assume to intervene in their cultural, social and political milieu. These communities perceive the consolidation of the state and modern political parties as an imminent threat to the superior values of the spirit and the individual that they defend. As the political experiences of totalitarian regimes burst in Europe, they perceive the state and the modern political party as a menace to their positions as free thinkers and humanists.

Macedonio Fernández and Jorge Luis Borges in the 1920s in Buenos Aires hatch a conspiracy to reveal the new mechanisms that political power configures to manipulate the masses, and the potential danger that the state represents. They also introduce in their literary productions secret societies and conspiratorial groups that, facing this similar threat, aim to infiltrate society at large to subvert social and political structures. In the 1910s, Alfonso Reyes participates in a closed group of intellectuals in Mexico, which certainly reproduces the system of the masonic lodges that had functioned during the nineteenth century. As Reyes bears witness to the imminent collapse of Europe, he also conceives the formation of an exclusive intellectual elite that could create a safe shelter for civilization, while he leaves in obscurity the secret and superior form of knowledge that this intellectual elite masters, and the obscure mechanisms of power that it configures. Octavio Paz, from the 1950s until the 1990s, has a decisive role shaping the dynamics of the Mexican cultural milieu in which mafias of intellectuals conspire to impose their hegemony. He also provides en exhaustive analysis of the formation of the poets' brotherhood and creates an alternative genealogy of knowledge to invest poets with the authority of mastering a superior form of understanding.

In their literary and intellectual production, these authors delineate the strategies that a secret society and restricted communities of intellectuals follow to found a superior order, foster

cultural hegemony and conspire against certain political regimes while supporting others. By emulating the model of the secret society and restricted community that they introduce in their writings, they seek to intervene in their milieu and engender a transfiguration of abstract ideas into real change in the material world. The narratives themselves reflect esoteric knowledge and the oath and rituals of initiation, while skirting more clandestine concepts, such as the secret, the sacred and sacrifice. As the textual structure resonates with the structure of the writers' closed organizations, it also sheds light on their ideological and political perspectives on society at large and on the power of the state that they aim to undermine or defend.

Raymond Williams has drawn attention to the methodological difficulties for the analysis of small cultural groups.[2] There may or there may not be visible and organized institutions, through which the group operates and develops. The group's moral and ethical principles may or may not be codified. Thus Williams points out that the study of a small cultural group should mainly focus on "[…] a body of practice or a distinguishable ethos [of the group], rather than the principles or stated aims of a manifesto" (229). It should illuminate this body of practice and ethos through the study of the internal organization of the group in a wider context, involving the actual relationship of the group with other groups and society at large, the social formation of the group, its social class and education, the group's position, ideas, practices and aesthetic taste. In my research, I analyze these crucial cultural and sociological aspects of the groups of writers in which Macedonio, Borges, Reyes and Paz, are involved. I also articulate the specific historical contexts in which their intellectual productions are inscribed.

Furthermore my approach allows me to analyze literary texts and essays from a new angle. I regard the strategic positioning of the closed intellectual elites in which these authors participate as informative of their writings about secret societies, sects, brotherhoods, and

[2] See Williams. "The Bloomsbury Fraction."

restricted communities of intellectuals. I examine how these writers, through a literary aesthetic, represent the re-foundation of society as a collective project that should be carried out by a selective minority of artists and intellectuals, infiltrating the community at large with its values. I also particularly analyze the genealogy of knowledge that they create to invest artists and intellectuals with the authority to gain access to exclusive sources of knowledge. Michel Foucault argues: […] it seems to me that the formation of discourses and the genealogy of knowledge need to be analyzed, not in terms of types of consciousness, modes of perception and forms of ideology, but in terms of tactics and strategies of power (182).[3] The strategies of power that the closed communities of intellectuals deploy to implant their cultural hegemony, demarcate their territory and domains, and establish mechanisms of inclusions and exclusions, do more than draw the geopolitics map of their cultural milieu.

These tactic and strategies also shed new light on the formation of the writers' literary and intellectual discourses about secret societies and restricted communities of intellectuals. The notion of the secret society functions as a pivotal venue in my research. It allows me to interrogate the implications and consequences for the formation of closed intellectual elites in Mexico and Argentina. It also provides a new perspective from which to analyze the literary discourses that introduce secret societies, and intellectual productions that reflect on the role, position and function of artists and intellectuals in society at large. My ultimate aim is to illuminate the dynamic relationships that emerge between their narratives and their actual involvement in the creation of exclusive communities of intellectuals.

I rely on the research conducted by Roger Caillois, a founding member of the *Collège de Sociologie* (1937-39), a research center in Paris devoted to study primitive and secret societies, and on his experience as he participates in the formation of a hermetic community of scholars,

[3] See Foucault. "Questions on Geography."

which behind its visible facet assumed the form and dynamic of a secret society. I address Caillois' sociology of intellectuals, and his actual encounter with members of intellectual elites from Mexico and Argentina, to illuminate hidden aspects of the structure of power that restricted communities of intellectuals configure in Latin America. I also introduce Jacques Derrida's reflections on the secret to analyze how in Macedonio's literary production a secret creates a zone of not understanding in the narrative structure that compels the reader to intervene and, connecting the pieces of a conspiracy, participate in the plot. Through Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's analysis on the becoming of the secret, as set in motion by a secret society, I analyze the form and dynamic that secret societies assume in Borges' short stories to subvert social and power structures. I introduce Michel Foucault's reflections on how the modern philologist restores an enigmatic density to words, analyzing how Reyes, as a modern philologist, configures an esoteric dimension in his system of thought. Through Giorgio Colli's work on the ancient Greek world mythology I analyze how Paz displaces from philosophical thought to poetic thought, which becomes his cognitive instrument.

Until now it has never been studied how the triangular intellectual connection among members of intellectual elites from Mexico, Argentina and France was based on their mutual affinities for the formation of closed groups of intellectual elites. Did these affinities go beyond the formation of recognizable intellectual elites in the public sphere in Latin America? Were there social, historical and political circumstances that could pressure members of Latin American intellectual elites to hide a facet of their groups? What would have been the ramifications of the cross-cultural communication between Callois and Latin American intellectuals? In my research, I have found fascinating answers to these questions. I am able to show how the affinities between Caillois and Latin American intellectuals actually manifested

themselves not only in Argentina, where he spent six years, but also in Mexico, as I study Reyes' cultural project for the formation of a restricted intellectual elite. I have also traced the influence of these connections through time as they influenced Octavio Paz's project for the formation of a closed community of intellectuals in the Mexican cultural milieu, during the 1970s.

In the First Chapter of my dissertation, following Borges' and Macedonio's involvement in a hermetic group of intellectuals at the beginning of the 1920s in Buenos, I analyze the conspiracy that they conceive to intervene in their cultural and political milieu. I frame the positioning of this new generation of writers in a specific cultural and historical milieu. I explore how their cultural and literary project converged in a historical moment at which profound transformations were changing both society at large and the Argentinean state. I then examine how Macedonio consummates the connection between literary narrative and conspiracy in his novel *Museo de la novela de la Eterna (Primera novela Buena)*. I articulate Macedonio's theory of the state, his metaphysical principles, and the experimental narrative strategies that he develops in the novel to explain how his writing destabilizes readers' individual identities in order to reconfigure their subjectivities. Finally, I shed light on how he parallels the literary machine with the political machine to project an alternative community. I analyze his metaphysical reflections, his theory of the state and his political position, to perceive the community that he projects.

In the Second Chapter, I analyze Borges' early literary production to illuminate the structure and the dynamic of a sect. I argue that this group represents the first trace in his work of restricted communities, a trace which encompasses his own experience as a member of this kind of community. Then I particularly trace the exchange of ideas that existed between the closed intellectual elite that gathered around the Argentinean literary journal *Sur* (Borges being a

prominent member) and Caillois. By examining the traces left by this interchange, I reveal that the transatlantic connection between intellectuals from the group and Caillois was fundamentally based on the configurations and functions that they believed closed intellectual elites should assume. I also illuminate the probable decisive influence that Caillois had in fostering Borges' literary imagination of secret societies, sects and conspiracies, when they become more prominent in the 1940s. I focus my analysis on the formation of two different kinds of secret societies in his literary production. On the one hand, I examine a clandestine organization that become scattered to infiltrate social and political structure. On the other, I illuminate a secret society that carries out an operation to gain access to the power of the state. The analysis of a secret society that achieves the power of the state lead me to a reflection on the possible consequences for this type of organization when it controls the power of the state. Finally I address Borges' negative retrospective view, during the last stage of his work, on his participation and engagement with a conspiratorial group in the 1920s.

In the Third Chapter, I trace how the affinities between Caillois and *Sur* actually manifested themselves in the formation of restricted communities of intellectuals in Mexico. Alfonso Reyes, an international member of the editorial committee of *Sur*, introduced and promoted Caillois' work in Mexico. I first examine Reyes' early participation in the formation of a closed intellectual elite in Mexico around the 1910s. I then study his cultural project to organize a restricted community of intellectuals as it headed into the 1940s, when it achieved a Pan-American scope. I also analyze the bridges that emerge between this cultural project and Reyes' creative writing. I particularly focus my research on how he infuses his narrative with a mystical force, which he believes can foster a new utopia for the continent through literature and poetry.

In the Fourth Chapter, I demonstrate that new generations of intellectual elites in Mexico embody the model of the mafia. I first introduce the struggle for cultural hegemony that took place among intellectual elites between the late 1950s and the late 1970s, focusing on the intervention carried out by the closed group led by Fernando Benítez and Carlos Fuentes. I then trace the influential role that Octavio Paz played in shaping this cultural milieu, and his incipient alliance with a mafia group, which he broke up when he decided to form his own closed cadre of intellectuals. I analyze Paz's vision of the role of poets in society and his conviction that they form a brotherhood. I also discuss Paz's understanding of the origin of the Mexican community. I particularly focus on the crucial role that he attributes to the sacred and to the sacrificial ritual, which he believes recurs cyclically at the origin of community, and on the decisive role that he assigns to intellectuals in disrupting this violent cycle. I also analyze Paz's poetry to shed light on how these crucial elements of his thought crystallize in his literary production. Last, I articulate his intellectual production and his actual political position in the public arena.

In the conclusion, I analyze the depiction of secret societies in the literary texts and the actual formation of restricted communities of intellectual in relation to the consolidation of the power of the state and the modern political parties, at the beginning of the twentieth century. I focus on how the representation of such communities and the positioning of the intellectual elites in their cultural milieu vary according to the ideology of the political regimes and the experiences of totalitarian political regimes in Europe. I also trace how, by 1960s and 1970s, Paz starts to perceive the decline of the power of the sate and hence rethinks the positioning of artists and intellectuals facing this profound transformation of the state apparatus.

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Macedonio Fernández:

Narrative and Conspiracy

Introduction

On March 24, 1921, Macedonio Fernández left his modest room in a boarding house in downtown Buenos Aires and headed to the city's port—more precisely toward the north dock, at which passenger ships arrived. After seven years in Europe, Macedonio's old friend and his friend's family were coming back to Buenos Aires. The city had changed drastically during the last few years. The continuous flow of immigrants from Europe and a booming economy had built a modern, dynamic, and cosmopolitan city. The public electric light and transportation systems, and innovations in the architecture of public and private buildings had configured a new physiognomy for the metropolis on the pampas plains. In the city, although well separated by neighborhoods, lived the upper bourgeoisie, a petty bourgeoisie, and an incipient urban proletariat. On the outskirt, which were still very close to the city's center, lived the *lumpenproletariat*, which was formed in part by men working in the slaughterhouses and migrants from the provinces who had moved closer to the capital seeking to improving their material conditions.

Macedonio was part of *la bohème* of Buenos Aires. Once he had been a well-established lawyer. He had worked as a lawyer for 25 years without having much enthusiasm for the profession, until 1920. That year unexpectedly he lost his wife, Elenea de Obieta, who died from a botched abdominal surgery. He then decided to leave his four children with their grandparents and aunts and assumed a nomadic life, moving from one place to another in Buenos Aires city

and the suburbs. He settled in the Palermo neighborhood only five years before he died in 1952. Carlos García, among other literary critics, has pointed out that the dramatic experience of losing his wife will lead Macedonio to focus on metaphysical reflections and on poetry.[4] He had been self-taught in philosophy, and had published a few poems, short stories and articles about philosophy, law, social science, and literature. After his wife's death, Macedonio will resume writing poetry, but refused to publish his work. Only after the insistence of some of his friends he will publish fragments of his work, and it will be his son, Adolfo de Obieta, who would later edit and posthumously publish most of his texts.

Macedonio went to receive his friend and his friend's family at the city's port some months after he had lost his wife. Jorge Luis Borges says about his encounter with him that day: "Quizás el mayor acontecimiento de mi regreso fue Macedonio Fernández. De toda la gente que he conocido en mi vida […] nadie me ha dejado una impresión tan profunda y duradera como Macedonio. Cuando desembarcamos en la Dársena Norte estaba esperándonos con su figura diminuta y su bombín negro, y terminé heredando de mi padre su amistad" (70).[5] [Perhaps, the most important event when I came back [to Buenos Aires] was to meet Macedonio Fernández. From all the people that I had met in my life, nobody has made such deep and longstanding impression on me as he did. When we disembarked at the north inner harbor he was waiting for us, with his tiny figure and his black derby, and I ended up inheriting his friendship from my father]. Macedonio met Borges when the latter was still a youth and the former participated in the *tertulias* that Jorge Guillermo Borges, the writer's father, organized at the family's home; Evaristo Carriego and Alvaro Melián Lafinur, among others, also participated in these meetings. Macedonio had met Jorge Guillermo Borges while both of them were in law school and they

[4] See Carlos García. *Macedonio/ Borges. Correspondencia, 1922-1939: Crónica de una Aamistad.* Also see Germán García, "Duelo imposible," 69-94.
[5] See Borges and Giovanni. *Autobiografía: 1899-1970*.

became close friends. They graduated together in the same year and participated in the utopian project of founding an anarchist community in Paraguay. They probably maintained an epistolary interchange while the Borges family was in Europe, but there are not letters to be found.

Macedonio had been also in contact with his old friend's son, Jorge Luis Borges. The younger Borges had already expressed a strong interest in literature, especially in poetry, and had published essays, poems, manifests, short stories, and several translations from different languages. In Seville, young Borges had met the Spanish avant-garde poet and writer Rafael Cansinos Asséns and joined his group, the *ultraístas*. He had also paid close attention to the dramatic political events that were developing in Europe and showed an incipient sympathy for the Russian Revolution, which he would later neglect.[6] Carlos Garcia argues that precisely "una transformación literaria de lo político parece haber sido uno de los primeros puntos de acercamiento intelectual entre Borges y Macedonio" (31) [a literary transformation of the political seems to have been one of the first common interest that fostered the intellectual kinship between Borges and Macedonio]. Macedonio sent his cousin, Marcelo del Mazo, a letter dated March 3, 1920, in which he says that he has started to create a conspiracy to intervene in the presidential election of 1922 in order to seize the control of the power of the State, and that he had been in contact with, among others, the younger Borges, who had sent him several letters from Madrid.[7]

This plan, as will be later further explained, also encompassed the task of collectively writing a novel. On 1921, Borges sent his friend Jacobo Sureda, a poet from Mallorca, a letter in

[6] During those years Borges writes poems such as "Trinchera," "Rusia," "Gesta maximilista," and "Guardia Roja," and plans a book of poems, *Salmos Rojos or Ritmos Rojos*, which he will later abandon. For a further analysis on Borges' variant political position see Bosteels. "La Ideologia Borgeana."
[7] See Macedonio Fernández. *Obras Completas*, Vol. 2, 162.

which he not only altered the plot of the novel, but also attributed to himself the original idea. Borges writes:

> No sé si te hablé en mi última carta de un tal Macedonio Fernández y de un muchacho Nobove [sic[8]] con los cuales proyecto urdir una novela fantástica en colaboración. El argumento, ideado por mí y todavía muy esquemático y fragmentario, trata de los medios empleados por los maximalistas para provocar una neurastenia general en todos los habitantes de Buenos Aires y abrir así camino al bolchevikismo [sic]. (60-61)[9]
>
> [I do not know if I have told you in my last letter about someone named Macedonio Fernández and another guy named Nobove [sic] with whom I plan to hatch a fantastic novel in collaboration. The plot, which I conceived and it is still too sketchy and fragmentary, is about the means employed by the maximalists to provoke in the citizens of Buenos Aires a general neurasthenia and clear the path for the bolshevism].

Julio Prieto asserts that it may be possible that Borges originally conceived the idea of the collective novel, but he points out that years later Borges will reject his affiliation to the Russian Revolution, tamp down his participation in the conspiratorial plan, and claim that it was originally Macedonio's project.[10] Borges will also distance himself from the very idea of the performativity of literature, although he will always remember the strong impact that

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[8] Borges probably refers to Julio César Dabove. See Borges's anthology, *Macedonio Fernández*, 18.
[9] See Meneses, Carlos. *Cartas De Juventud De J. L. Borges (1921-1922)*.
[10] See Prieto. *Desencuadernados: Vanguardias Ex-Céntricas en el Río de La Plata (Macedonio Fernández y Felisberto Hernández)*, 69.

Macedonio's personality had on him at that time.[11]

It is also interesting to contrast not only Borges' and Macedonio's views of each other, and their opinions on literature and politics, but also their views on the city. For the former, following his return from Europe, Buenos Aires would become the locus of his literary imagination and explorations for almost the next ten years. Borges says that after he disembarked: "Fue para mí una sorpresa después de vivir en tantas ciudades europeas […] descubrir que el lugar donde nací se había transformado en una ciudad muy grande y muy extensa, casi infinita, poblada de edificios bajos con azotea, que se extendía por el oeste hacia lo que los geógrafos y los literatos llaman la pampa" (63).[12] [After living in several European cities, it surprised me to discover that the place where I was born [Buenos Aires] had transformed in a big extended city, almost infinite, populated by low buildings with flat roofs, which expanded toward the west, toward what the geographers and writers call the *pampa*]. For Macedonio, Buenos Aires was also the vortex that propelled his metaphysical reflections, theory of the State, and literary production. He writes: "[…] Buenos Aires, suprema ciudad merodeada por las sombras de campos sin límites, viviendo a oscuras de su destino, como el trasatlántico, iluminado, en la vasta oscuridad del mar en cuyo seno se avanza; en ambos se vive sin noción de rumbo, por tanto con entero sentido del presente;" ["Buenos Aires, that prowling through the shadows of the limitless land, living in the darkness without destiny, like an ocean liner,

[11] The centrality of Macedonio Fernández's work in Borges' life is clearly also manifested in Borges' speech at Macedonio's funeral: "[…] Yo por aquellos años lo imité, hasta la transcripción, hasta el apasionado y devoto plagio. Yo sentía: Macedonio es la metafísica, es la literatura. Quienes lo precedieron pueden resplandecer en la historia, pero eran borradores de Macedonio, versiones imperfectas y previas. No imitar ese canon hubiera sido una negligencia incredible[…]." See *Sur* (n° 209-210. Marzo-Abril, 1952), 146.

[12] See Borges and Giovanni. *Autobiografía: 1899-1970*. Borges will later claim that he also felt kind of disappointed when he started to explore the city after many years in Europe. (See Borges's anthology. *Macedonio Fernández,* 10). Nevertheless, he crystallized the fascination that the city held for him during the 1920s in many of his texts. Some of these thoughts are included in his book *Fervor de Buenos Aires* (1923).

illuminated in the vast darkness of the sea whose heart it claves; both live directionless, in the fullness of the present"] (135; Schwartz 132).[13] While Borges sees from the river's shore the city expanding toward the pampas—as I will detail in the next chapter, he will focus his literary imagination on the threshold between the city and the countryside—Macedonio perceives a city that will break free from the pampas' anchoring weight to sail toward an unknown faith. Both of them conduct a mythical exploration of the city. Borges will create the myths for Buenos Aires. Macedonio will predict the city's destiny.

In the first section of this chapter, I will address Borges' participation in avant-garde literary groups in Buenos Aires during the 1920s. My analysis will focus mainly on the collective project that a group of young writers who gathered around a literary journal that they created, *Martín Fierro*, carried out to challenge the previous generation of intellectuals and cultural institutions. I will frame the positioning of this new generation of writers in a specific cultural and historical milieu. I will explore how their cultural and literary project converged in a historical moment at which profound transformations were changing both society at large and the Argentinean state. The group gathered around the mythical figure of Macedonio, who was at the margins of cultural and literary institutions, and became a closed conspiratorial circle. However, this radical positioning became just another irreverent gesture by young writers challenging the old intellectual elite, a mere tactic to assault literary and cultural institutions, and it did not lead the group to provoke a radical rupture or to create an aesthetic breakthrough. Thus, I will reflect on the ambivalent relationship that Macedonio had with the self-proclaimed avant-garde group.

In the second section, I will explore how Macedonio consummates the connection between literary narrative and conspiracy in his novel *Museo de la novela de la Eterna (Primera novela Buena)*. The writer creates an experimental narrative style that aims to destabilize a

[13] See Macedonio Fernández. *Museo de la Novela de la Eterna* [*Museum of the Eternal Novel*].

reader's individual identity. The novel functions as a machine that provokes the deindividuation of its readers to expose how a central power—as in the power of the state—can impose a type of individuation that molds their subjectivities. Macedonio's ultimate goal is to reconfigure his readers' subjectivity. To achieve this goal, he uses different narrative strategies. In this second section, I will analyze the author's use of absence in the novel to hook readers into the story and to then select which readers will gain access to the text. I will illuminate how the literary text aims to strike at readers' core selves in order to liberate them from their customary planes of reality and enthrall them in the novel as they themselves become characters in the story. In the third section, I will map how language is pushed to its limits in the novel, through a deterritorialization of the dominant language, beyond which a new territory for fiction is created in which readers are submerged. These narrative devices will be analyzed following the previous enumerated sequence; nevertheless, they do not emerge in the text in this order and they cannot be clearly distinguished independently from one another. As they intersect and juxtapose, they trigger other mechanisms that function in unison to generate the decentering of the reader's self.

In the last section, I will shed light on how Macedonio parallels the literary machine with the political machine so that the readers who have thus been captured become members of a community of conspirators that bears witness to an ineffable experience that can lead them to conceive their own alternative community. I will discuss the connections between the community of conspirators in the novel and the author's actual political projects. Finally, I will analyze Macedonio's political philosophy supporting both his theory of the state and his political position.

I. *Martín Fierro*: Avant-gardists and conspirators

During the 1920s, bearing in mind his involvement with the *ultraístas* in Spain, Borges became an active member of avant-garde literary groups in Buenos Aires. He assumed a leading role in a collective intervention in the cultural and literary scene. The new generation of writers, Oliverio Girondo, Raúl González Tuñón, Leopoldo Marechal, and Arturo Cancela, among others, embraced the "new" as the basis of their literary work and as a radical departure from their predecessors. Graciela Montaldo points out that "change" was an essential characteristic of the new cultural and literary production at the time, promoting "revolutions" in the field of aesthetics (25). The young writers established an alternative genealogy for cultural and literary traditions that challenged the previous generation of writers, which was deeply influenced by the prominent figure of Leopoldo Lugones and the *modernismo*'s aesthetic.

The young writers' aesthetic revolution was inscribed within a social and political context that was also radically changing. The enactment of the Sáenz Peña Law, which in 1912 established a mandatory, secret, and universal vote for the national election of 1916, provoked a deep change in the country's process of cultural formation. Until then, a closed intellectual elite had claimed the authority to define the cultural traditions and values that should constitute the national identity. Additionally, since the 1880s political power had favored an intellectual elite that frequented salons and clubs over intellectuals who were actually engaged in political actions.[14] In 1916, the free and democratic presidential election won by Hipólito Yrigoyen, candidate of the Unión Cívica Radical, marked the beginning of a new political and cultural era in Argentina. The university reforms of 1918 also placed at the center of the new process a

[14] See Masiello. "La exaltación de la elite," in *Lenguajes e Idologías: Las Escuelas Argentnas de Vanguardia* (28-32).

younger generations of intellectuals. They then emerged as the spokesmen for modern intellectual trends and the promoters of fundamental changes in the political and cultural realms.[15]

The new generation of writers was not only opposed to Lugones and *modernismo,* but was also opposed to the structure and organization of established intellectual institutions. Prose still maintained an ambiguous status in the literary world, and therefore the young writers advocated a new artistic sensibility that they believed should be expressed in poetry. In the aesthetic field they advocated European avant-garde poetries, such as the *ultraísmo*, against the poetic aesthetic of the older generation. The older generation, perceiving this as a threat, then tried to include the new literary voices in order to domesticate them. Hence, in 1921, Borges published a sort of manifesto of the avant-garde generation, titled "*Ultraísmo,*" in the literary journal *Nosotros* (1907-1943), which was the voice of established literary authority at the time.[16] But the spirit reigning among the new writers, who insisted on the necessity of innovating the aesthetic field, rapidly led them to target *Nosotros* and the older writers around the journal.

Therefore, they created new journals in which to publish their work, facing the challenge of a new public reconfigured by the immigration process and by the transformations of daily urban life that were a result of the rapid process of modernization. *Prisma* (1921), *Inicial* (1923)*, Proa* (1922), and *Martin Fierro* (1924) were the literary journals through which the young writers aimed their strikes against the old guard's cultural fort. These journals, in varying

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[15] See Rock. "The fall of the oligarchy," in *State Building and Political Movements in Argentina, 1860-1916*

[16] See *Nosotros* (XV, No. 151. December). Hugo J. Verani summarizes the main points of Borges's manifesto: "(1) reduction of poetry to its primordial element: the metaphor; (2) elimination of connectives and superfluous adjectives; (3) abolition of ornaments, confessions, circumstantial detail, preaching, and affected vagueness; (4) synthesis of two or more images into one to broaden the power suggestion of language" (122).

degrees, were the visible manifestation of the reorganization of intellectual hierarchies. Among them, *Martin Fierro* articulated the most virulent attacks on the older generation, and Borges contributed frequently to it. *Martin Fierro*, which is also the title of José Hernández's iconic book of the gaucho genre, expressed another point of convergence among the new generation of writers in their attack on the older generation. In order to define the "new," which was a key element demarcating the line of confrontation, it was necessary to reappropriate literary tradition and displace it from the cenacle of the established literary canon. Thus, from an alternate point of departure, standing on new aesthetic forms infused and shaped by foreign literature, the avant-garde reread the literary tradition that depicted the *criollo* and created new symbols with which to represent it.

The new generation of writers, *les enfants terribles* of the literary and cultural milieu, not only turned irreverently against the old writers, but they also drew lines of demarcation within their own generation. Two distinctive groups, *Florida* and *Boedo*, structured the new cultural and literary debates. Both groups aimed to confront the older generation and to occupy a central place in cultural debates, and both of them located their confrontation in the geographical space of Buenos Aires. Florida group's members published in the journal *Martin Fierro*, and Boedo's writers (among its members were Elías Caltelnuovo, Roberto Mariani, César Tiempo, and Leónidas Barletta) published in *Los Pensadores* and *Claridad*. While the former group favored aesthetic innovation and literary imagination, the latter expressed a strong engagement with social and political issues regarding literary forms.[17] Francine Masiello asserts that this binarizing struggle, in which public and open confrontation was the common currency, reflected the specialization, division of labor, individualism, and fragmentation that had characterized the

[17] For an interesting analysis of the profound ideological and political differences between the two groups, see Barletta. *Boedo y Florida: Una Versión Distinta*.

modernization of the literary world since the turn of the century. On the other hand, she also points out that this showed both groups' clear intention to assault the centers of power that structured the cultural milieu and to achieve recognition for their own literary and cultural projects.[18]

As I will further analyze in the next chapter, Borges led the *martinfierristas* to a newly imagined urban space, a fertile field in which a new aesthetic of *criollismo* could be birthed through the work of a marginal poet, Evaristo Carriego. Borges focused his literary imagination and production on the outskirts of the city. Borges writes, especially during the 1920s, about the recent lost past of the city and brings to life stories of the toughs and knife fighters who, in defending their neighborhood's pride, created a mythology for Buenos Aires. Furthermore, Borges guided the *martinfierristas* to radicalize their rupture with traditional literary institutions, as they gathered around the figure of Macedonio. Borges believed that Macedonio's work, on the margins of the literary market and institutions, and almost unknown until the publication of his texts in *Martin Fierro*, was a new *criollo* invention and an aesthetic breakthrough. Thus, he promoted Macedonio's work and made him more visible in the literary scene.

The *martinfierristas* believed that Macedonio could be opposed to Lugones. Macedonio's thinking, which he preferred to transmit through oral communications containing a subterranean, secret narrative, and within a limited circle, fascinated this group of young writers. He fostered the group's imaginary that a conspiracy hatched on the periphery of the cultural milieu could assault the fort of the traditional intellectual elite and subvert its hierarchies. He refused to publish his writing and remained enshrouded in a mysterious anonymity. Nevertheless, his friends insisted that he publish his texts and finally he released some of them. After this, he steadily infiltrated the literary scene, publishing fragments of his poems, short stories, and novels

[18] See Masiello. Ibid, 58-59.

in literary journals that his close circle of friends edited. Macedonio personified the figure of an absent writer writing from the margins, who threatens established literary institutions with a revolutionary aesthetic that could subvert social, political, and cultural structures.

His close circle of friends became a hermetic community of writers. David Viñas points out that there was a deliberate practice of secrecy amongst them, and Ricardo Piglia claims that a close relationship was forged between this avant-garde group and the notion of conspiracy.[19] As has been mentioned before, Macedonio conceived a conspiracy to become the president of Argentina; his intimate circle of friends actually considered this a possibility and spread the idea. In the anthology, *Macedonio Fernández* (1961), Borges writes that the project also consisted of collectively writing a fantastic novel, set in Buenos Aires, titled "El hombre que será presidente" (18) [The man who will be president]. He says that in the story there are two arguments. One of them is visible: the curious steps that Macedonio took to become the president of the republic. The other one is secret: the conspiracy planned by a sect of neurasthenic and crazy millionaires to achieve the same goal. Supposedly the group sketched the first two chapters and the denouement of the story; however, this novel has not been possible to find.

The *martinfierristas* formed a closed community to conspire against and intervene in the real world by engaging in a parody of the democratic political regime. Macedonio argued that it was easier to become a president than to become a pharmacist, since statistically there were more people who wanted to become the latter than the former. This presidential scheme sought to achieve only a minimal material effect; the effects they actually sought were a powerful metaphor that served to criticize the political system. In the 1920s, the political project of the local oligarchy, which had determined the destiny of the nation since its independence in 1810,

[19] See Viñas. "Algunos Protagonistas, Nudos y Crispaciones," 16, and also see Piglia. *Teoría del complot*, 21.

had started to crumble. The masses of immigrants entering the country had sparked a political crisis, fragmenting the national identity and undermining the cultural plan that the old elite had tried to impose. In order to guarantee governability it became necessary to extend political representation to the immigrants, so the Sáenz Peña Act was passed into law.

In the face of the mere illusion of consensus that was imposed by these liberal reforms, the group of writers imagined an intervention that would expose the machinations that political power staged in order to manipulate the masses. Horacio González asserts that in 1920, Macedonio gathered his group of friends at the bar El Molino every Saturday to plan the conspiracy. González writes: "[h]e allí el retrato condensado de una inquietud histórica y conspirativa" (92) [here there is the condensed portrait of a historical and conspiratorial inquisitiveness]. Piglia argues that the group was an underground sort of secret brotherhood that imagined it was possible to infiltrate social and political structures, and to thus undermine the established institutions.[20] However, the conspiracy was not intended to subvert actual social and political institutions, but rather to illuminate the mechanisms that power uses to exert domination. The group also aimed to demonstrate that fiction, rather than reinforcing the mechanisms of power and domination, could instead project an alternative utopian community that questions the contemporary society.

However, this radical positioning finally deluded them and became just another irreverent gesture against the old intellectual elite. It became a tactic with which to assault cultural and literary institutions, but did not provoke a radical rupture either in the field of aesthetics or in the social and political realms. According to Claudia Gilman, the literary texts that this new

[20] See Piglia. *Teoría del complot*, 35.

generation of writers produced cannot even be considered avant-garde literature.[21] She asserts that even though they shared some similarities with the European avant-garde, the Argentinean writers lagged behind their European counterparts in terms of both aesthetic and political innovation. The Argentinean writers did not radically break from either tradition or moral values, as would be expected of a true avant-garde movement.

The younger group of writers in fact rejected the more radical European avant-garde movements. Beatriz Sarlo claims that the Argentinean avant-garde assumed a moderate position that was more focused on establishing an alternative genealogy within the cultural and literary tradition that certainly attacked some of the *modernistas* writers, but also strengthened the idea of cultural continuity.[22] The *martinfierristas* reconfigured the literary system of canonization and recognition. They neglected the established tradition and its intellectual lineages, and recuperated writers who were ignored by the cultural and literary institutions. Thus Sarlo claims that the group: "[…] convierte a un marginal [Macedonio] en centro de su sistema, afirma que los que no leen así la literatura son incapaces […] de comprender la vanguardia" (145) [transforms a marginal writer [Macedonio] into the center of its system of thought and claims that those who do not read literature in this manner are incapable of understanding the avant-garde]. Nevertheless, the Argentinean avant-garde, although it advocated a new literary aesthetic that criticized the bourgeoisie, did not actually subvert the roles or functions that cultural expression played in bourgeois society.

In this sense, it is interesting to note that Borges made marginal characters the centers of his own system of thought and writing. As has been already pointed out, one of these was Macedonio, who was part of *la bohème* in Buenos Aires. The other character, analyzed in the

[21] See Gilman. "Florida y Boedo: Hostilidades y Acuerdos," 47.
[22] See Sarlo. "Vanguardia y criollismo: la aventura de Martín Fierro," 127-171.

following chapter, was the tough and knife fighter, a literary character that Borges recuperated through Carriego's poetry. Macedonio and other marginal literary characters could, according to Marxist tradition, be considered members of the *lumpenproletariat*, subjects without a definite social class identity and hence without political agency to radically intervene in history.[23] However, Nicholas Thoburn claims that if there is a distinctive manifestation of the *lumpenproletariat*, "it is a mode of practice oriented toward the bolstering of identity cut off from the flows and relation of the social […] it is a *tendency toward the maintenance of identity*" (54). Borges' fascination with these marginal characters stems precisely from their deep division from society at large. As I will later argue, he depicts toughs and knife fighters as forming their own sect, since they so radically sever their ties with the community at large.

However, Macedonio's rupture is more radical than a mere tendency to preserve his singular identity, which itself resisted the usual channels of literary recognition and canonization. Thus, his relationship with the *martinfierristas* was ambivalent. The group used him more as a symbol than for the subversive power of his writing or his literary aesthetic. They admired his rebellion against the literary system and literary market, which demanded that writers produce a set of ideas and cultural expressions that could be exchanged for certain values, either in the form of recognition or monetary rewards. However, Macedonio neither identified with the

[23] In *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Karl Marx describes the individuals who are included in the nebulous social group that the *lumpenproletariat* constitutes: "[…] Alongside decayed with dubious means of subsistence and of dubious origin, alongside ruined and adventurous offshoots of the bourgeoisie, were vagabonds, discharged soldiers, discharged jailbirds, escaped gallery slave, swindlers, […], pickpockets, gamblers…brothel keepers, porters, *literati* […] tinkers, beggars—in short, the whole indefinite, disintegrated mass, thrown hither and thither, which the French call *la bohème*" (75). Marx, along with Friedrich Engels, coined the composite word *lumpenproletariat* in *The German Ideology* (1846), to describe the ancient Roman plebeians (as "midway between freeman and slaves, never becoming more than a proletarian rabble") and to criticize Max Stirner's constituency of the *lumpen*. In *Class Struggle in France* (1850), Marx claims that the *lumpenproletariat* forms a mass "strictly differentiated from the industrial proletariat" (50), but this distinction seems somewhat blurred, as he also includes the finance aristocracy, which he argues "in its mode of acquisition as well as in its pleasures, is nothing but the rebirth of the lumpen proletariat at the top of the bourgeois society" (36).

group's claim that they embodied the avant-garde nor with their belligerent tactics to assault the cultural milieu. He especially questioned how they articulated their ideas within the public sphere. His intellectual and literary production was conceived to undermine not only the status of the work of art in the bourgeois society, but also that society's social and political structures. He believed that the performativity of literature could capture individual readers' identities and reconfigure their subjectivities. Thus, he envisioned a novel to carry out this intervention.[24]

II. The Wise Use of Absence in *Museo de la Novela de la Eterna*

Macedonio wrote *Museo de la Novela de la Eterna* intermittently between 1925 and 1950, and it was published posthumously in 1967.[25] Fifty-six prologues, twenty chapters, four final sections, and one dedication compose the novel. The novel's plot seems to be simple. One of the main characters, *el Presidente*, who is a man of advanced age, gathers together a community of friends at his country house, "La Novela," which is located some hours from the city of Buenos Aires and close to the Río de la Plata's shore. The other characters whom the author introduces in the story are the members of this community. *El Presidente* meets them when he goes out for a ramble in the countryside or travels back to the city. Other characters approach his house and, as they inspire his sympathy, he invites them to stay at "La Novela." They live with him for some time, but *el Presidente*, feeling unhappy, empty and incomplete, decides that it is time for action and so he motivates the members of his community to carry out

[24] See Prieto. Ibid, 25-49. Also see Garth. "An Avant-garde Apart," *The Self of the City: Macedonio Fernández, the Argentine Avant-Garde, and Modernity in Buenos Aires*.

[25] Macedonio's son, Adolfo de Obieta, a poet and essayist, undertook the enormous task of deciphering his father's manuscripts and assembling *Museo de la Novela de la Eterna*. He also edited *Papeles de Recienvenido* and *No toda es vigilia la de los ojos abiertos*, and prepared the edition of Macedonio's complete work for the publishing house *Corregidor*.

a conspiracy that will invest Buenos Aires with beauty and mystery. He incites the other characters to make incursions into the city and provoke the amazement of its citizens as they go about daily life. Finally, the operation is completed. However, as *el Presidente* still feels sad, he gives orders to dissolve the community, which is then scattered so that nothing will be known about its members.

The formation of a community of conspirators that intervenes in the daily life of a city in order to change its destiny is one of the visible narrative threads that compose the novel. Nevertheless *Museo* is composed of a narrative structure that orbits around certain zones of non-understanding. Macedonio exposes the reader to these zones opening spaces of indeterminacy in his text that engender a silence, a secret, which cannot be totally penetrated by sense or meaning. As we shall see, there is an ineffable experience dwelling in the novel's heart, which also constitutes the community that *el Presidente* gathers together. In the opening lines of the novel, the writer anticipates that there will be a "wise used of *Absence*" in his book (4). In the fifty-six prologues that precede the novel's beginning, the idea of absence becomes a powerful narrative device with which to hook the reader's attention. The prologues are multiple veins running toward and away from the book's core, which is an empty center.

The novel compels readers to participate in creating the plot by placing zones of non-understanding within the narrative structure. As the text seems to be unfinished and disjointed, readers are called on actively to intervene in the story by connecting the pieces of the plot. Nevertheless, the writer tells us that he has not hidden a set of intrigues between the lines to be revealed by the narrator, the characters or the reader. This is not what he means as the "wise used of absence" that he deploys in the novel; rather, as Macedonio writes about his book, it is a "[n]ovela en que todo se sabe […]" [a novel in which everything is known] (14). He claims that

he will not take the readers blindfolded to the limits of their understanding. The far-fetched scenes represented in the novel and the abstruse depiction of the characters underpin the opening of a fictional territory for the novel, which casts off any pretention of representing reality. Although the characters are certainly individualized, they are in a continuous process of being created throughout the novel without ever receiving definitive contours that define them. Hence, the readers are never astonished by a sudden revelation that closes these gaps and provides the keys with which to interpret them. While the writer introduces the characters and the story, readers can perceive that something secret is emerging, but it remains sealed inside the story.

Macedonio's use of absence to create zones of indeterminacy in the story to hook the reader is one of the three functions of this narrative device in the novel. The second function of absence consists in working through a selection process of which readers will gain access to the novel. The author creates zones in the story that cannot be penetrated by sense in order to get rid of readers who are looking for a clear denouement of the plot with no loose ends. As he writes: "[D]e Personajes descartados puede hacerse una lista; de Lectores sólo un género descarto: el lector de desenlaces" ["You can make your own list of rejected Characters: I'm only rejecting one kind of Reader: the reader who skips to the end"] (68; Schwartz 68). Macedonio's strategy consists in introducing characters of which it is only possible to catch a partial glimpse. Thus, readers who need to observe definitive features to understand these characters and to imagine a clear dynamic for the story would be expelled from the novel. On the contrary, readers who can handle these uncertainties, only perceiving glimpses of the characters and the story, would be affected by the novel since they are able to embrace something obscure that will not be illuminated. These readers, clinging to the gaps and hanging in the voids that inhabit the story, will inevitably mold the characters in their minds to apprehend them. Thus, Macedonio believes

that these characters, who are in a constant process of being created, sometimes fading away into nothingness and other times almost becoming alive, will be engraved in the reader's minds. He says that this type of reader "leerá cómodamente así y lo trunco u oscuro no lo atarearán en entenderlo" ["will read comfortably and won't set himself the task of understanding the truncated or the obscure"] (68; Schwartz 68).

The third function of the use of absence in the novel consists of eroding a reader's individual identity. Macedonio's aim is, as the readers gain access to his novel's territory, that they will lose themselves, becoming another character within the story. The heterogeneity of the prologues provokes the initial fractures crisscrossing the novel's heart to open this territory for fiction, but they are not configured as a definitive structure. Each of the prologues is an independent sequence that intersects at some point with another prologue to drive readers to different edges from which they can face the voids dwelling in the story. Macedonio claims that the novel has been conceived as a house of the nonexistent. He writes: "[E]l anhelo que me animó en la construcción de mi novela fue crear un hogar, hacerla un hogar para la no existencia" ["my fervent hope was to make of the novel a home for the non-existence"] (22; Schwartz 19). The prologues set in motion a spiral that encircles the spaces of non-understanding that inhabit the novel. They delineate the structure of the home for some element of nonexistence, but this structure is an assemblage in a continuous process of being created, which readers apprehend and experiment with by first following the trails that the prologues open.

Macedonio's prologues are articulated within the novel to realign the readers' planes of reality. But rather than create an accurate representation of reality that traps the readers, because they perceive themselves to be represented in the novel, the writer seeks to situate the readers within the experience of blurring the boundaries that distinguish fiction from reality. The

prologues and the novel are both designed to expose the continuities between the narratives that invest the readers' planes of reality with sense and a literary narrative that projects a fictional story. Macedonio believes that a reader who is thus submerged in his novel will perceive the continuum between a "real" and a "fictional" world. As he intensifies the ample zones that remain in obscurity and the fissures that configure a fragmentary text, he drives the readers to experiment with something that for them actually does not exist. For this reason, he claims that he needs readers who can become "novelistic" readers in order to understand his plot.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that readers will interpret the story through their literary imaginations from "outside" of the novel. On the contrary, Macedonio imagines that readers will read the novel as if they were in a dream and, as happens when one is dreaming and is affected by an imaginary story, will release themselves from their actual worlds to become characters within his novel. He writes: "Somos un soñar sin límite, y sólo soñar. No podemos, pues, tener idea de lo que sea un no-soñar" ["We are a limitless dream and only a dream. We cannot, therefore, have any idea of what not-dreaming may be"] (24; Schwartz 21). He believes that we are dreaming constantly and that we only think that we are in a state of wakefulness because somebody tells us that we are awake. It is not possible to distinguish the dream world from the real world because there is not an ontological difference between the two. Reality is not a mystery to be deciphered, but is rather a continuum that cannot be differentiated from dreaming.

In *No todo es vigilia la de los ojos abiertos*, Macedonio asserts: "Todo ocurre sin ubicación alguna; ni próximo ni separado ni durando o perdurando ni anterior o posterior" (44) [Everything happens without a specific location; neither close nor separated, neither long-lasting nor enduring, neither prior nor subsequent]. These phenomena, these experiences of reality, only occur within the Self. For Macedonio, this means that they do not happen within oneself or

outside of oneself. Thus he believes that we can only conceive of the Self in a state of dreaming. He writes:

> [E]l estilo de ensueño es la única forma posible del Ser, su única versión concebible. Llamo estilo de ensueño a todo lo que se presenta como estado íntegramente de la subjetividad, sin pretensiones de correlativos externos, y llamo por eso al Ser un almismo ayoico, porque es siempre pleno en sus estados y sin demandar correlación con supuestas externalidades ni substancias, tal como es el Ensueño, todo del alma, pleno, absorbente e incomprometido con la alegada Causalidad. (243)
> [The dreaming alike style is the only possible form for the Being; it is its only thinkable version. I name the dreaming alike style to all that come to us as an integrated state of our subjectivity, without pretending external correlatives, and thus I call the Being an *almismo ayoico*, because it is always full in all of its states and without demanding correlation with supposed externalities or substances, it is such as Daydreaming is, all from the soul, full, absorbent and disengaged with the alleged Causality].

Macedonio argues that the being is "ayoico," because what the being feels does not correspond to an individual personal subjectivity. He believes that the experience of feeling is unique. There is not a plurality of sensitivities, but only one's feeling, which is a mystical perception of no one specific. The Being is one essence complete in all of its states, which neither refers back to an archetypical substance, projects images onto the external world nor is confined to a singular subjectivity. Thus, it can only be apprehended through a mystical revelation induced by

dreaming, which unveils a continuum that traverses the real world and reveals that external causality does not explain the phenomena that we perceive. This realization also illuminates Macedonio's idea that neither one's own subjectivity nor that of others determine reality. This is the sort of mystical experience that Macedonio stimulates in his readers in order to demonstrate that thinking and imagination can create any type of form on the continuum that traverses life. It can be a literary narrative that creates unconceivable events and objects, such as a "[z]apallo que se hizo cosmos" [a squash that became the cosmos], or a new way of living altogether that is not controlled by any external power.[26]

In the novel there is a character who plays the role of an actual reader reading the novel. This character enters into dialogues with the author, who is another character included in the story, and with other characters who question the reader, either clamoring for his/her intervention or grumbling due to his/her intromission in their private lives. These dialogues and the reader's interventions, as will be further analyzed, mold and recompose the character of the reader through the entire story with the aim of disturbing the actual reader's subjectivity. However, as I have argued above, the writer's aim is not to provide an accurate representation of reality. He seeks to provoke the readers into the experience of living within the story, as if they themselves were fictional characters. He is convinced that the novel can provoke a total commotion of their senses. It can induce in readers a reflexive experience that will dislocate them from their own reality. He considers that he can engender this pathos inducing readers to a total commotion of their senses. In this sense he writes about his novel: "[…] soy el primero que ha usado el prodigioso instrumento de conmoción conciencial que es el personaje de novela en su verdadera

[26] I am bearing in mind Macedonio's short story "El zapallo que se hizo cosmos," in which the unstoppable expansion of a squash has absorbed all of its exteriority. Hence he says that we cannot know if we are living inside or outside of this squash. As it will be later argued, Macedonio believes that a literary narrative and the narratives that found a nation and forge a national identity share the same status, and are interchangeable.

eficiencia y virtud: la conmoción total de la conciencia […]" ["I would like to be recognized as the first who has attempted to use that prodigious instrument, the commotion of consciousness—that is, the novelistic character in its proper efficiency and virtue. By this I mean the total commotion of consciousness…"] (18; Schwartz 16).

This reflexive experience is intended to expose how the reader's identity, "outside of the novel," is defined by a central power, such as the power of the State, which regulates the relationships among individuals and defines their identities. *Museo* is designed to work as an inverted mirror to expose these mechanisms of power and domination. As readers perceive that the novel, its characters and dialogues, reconfigure them, they will realize that power imposes similar fictional narratives on the readers' reality to assign specific functions to individuals and regulate their interactions. Macedonio's strategy to capture the readers consists in inviting them to let themselves go with the flow of the novel without aiming to clarify the contradictions that he raises in the plot or to illuminate what remains obscured. He writes: "Que siga [el lector] el cauce de arrastre emocional que la lectura vaya promoviendo minúsculamente" ["I implore the reader…to follow the course of the emotional pull that, molecule by molecule, the reading promotes in him"] (36; Schwartz 32). As the author develops his thoughts, which seem to be rather scattered, about the creative process of writing the novel, and to introduce the characters and develop the story, he subtly captivates the reader. He aims to almost hypnotize the reader into a state of mind in which "no está en guardia y en conciencia de hallarse ante un plan literario y no espera, ni advierte luego, haber sido conquistado" ["he isn't on guard and conscious that he is dealing with a literary campaign. He won't expect, nor later realize, that he has been conquered (36; Schwartz 32). Once those readers are enthralled in the story they will be finally captured by a world of fiction. Then, even in just a blink of an eye, they will release themselves

from themselves; “es decir que por un instante crea él mismo no vivir” [“so that for an instant he believes that he himself does not live”] (37; Schwartz 32).

Therefore, the analysis of the third function of the use of absence in the novel has revealed that it also provokes in readers the experience of ceasing to exist. Macedonio summarizes how his wise use of absence functions in the novel and the experience that it provokes, as he asks in one of the prologues:

> ¿Qué importa si logro interés por el relato y mientras el lector se cree lector porque los personajes le son personajes en la novela y en los prólogos aunque leve, ahumadamente entrevistos y en actos y hecho truncos…, operar, a favor del descuido conciencial obtenido por interesamiento, un «choque de inexistencia» en el psique de él, del lector, el choque de estar allí no leyendo sino siendo leído, siendo personaje? (38)
>
> Even if I have invented the novel-museum, it won’t matter if I’m able to raise interest in the story if all the while the reader believes himself to be only a reader. If to him the characters are only characters in a novel and in the prologues (although delicate, smokily glimpsed and in truncated actions and facts…) I’ll have failed to effect a “shock of inexistence” in the psyche of the reader—the shock of being here, not reading, but being read, being a character, in favor of the conscous carelessness obtained by interestedness. (Schwartz 34)

Macedonio believes that readers who glimpse the idea that they do not actually exist and then inevitably withdraw to their previous belief that, in fact, they exist, will understand forever that

the idea of non-being, i.e., death, is merely a belief. As will be then further analyzed, this understanding emerges in the novel as an ineffable experience, which the central character of the story, *La Eterna*, sparks; it also seems to found the community of conspirators.

III. The Deterritorialization of Language

Macedonio experiments with his writing to create a new milieu for fiction—more specifically for the novel. He envisions a territory for the novel in which readers will not simply contemplate a work of art. He does not intend to move readers emotionally and inspire their empathy for the characters' affections, their happiness and sorrows, which could compel the readers to hallucinate that they are participating in the plot. Instead, his writing aims to pierce the readers' bodies. And yet, Macedonio does not seem to exert any form of violent constriction on readers, as exemplified by the violence that he believes that a realistic novel engenders by provoking a reduction of an irreducible multiplicity.[27] *Museo* seeks to open trails to escape from this reduction of experience, paths that the author claims have never been discovered before. He writes to create a new space in which all form can be undone and redone, a milieu in which the readers' individual identities will be changed forever, as they bear witness to the opening of a metaphysical enigma.

Macedonio himself situates a threshold within his literary production, between *Adriana Buenos Aires (última novela mala)*, which he finished writing in 1938, and *Museo de la novela de la Eterna (primera novela buena)*. In *Papeles de Recienvenido*, he asserts:

[27] For an interesting analysis of Macedonio's criticism of the realist novel, see Jitrik. *La novela futura de Macedonio Fernández,* 53-58.

> Mi opinión, que quizá no será compartida, es que la novela que se ha usado (y que yo practicaré [sic] previamente, en la "última novela mala": *Adriana Buenos Aires*), la de alucinación, o sea de hacer participar al lector en las alegrías y penas de personaje, es irremediablemente pueril; que sólo será artística una novela que se proponga –y obtenga más o menos intensamente– el supremo resultado de una conmoción total de la conciencia, conmoción que será la más plena apertura hacia el total enigma metafísico. (91-92)
>
> [My opinion, which may not be shared, is that the novel that has been used (and which I will practice [sic] previously, in the "last bad novel": *Adriana Buenos Aires*), the hallucination one, i.e. that makes the reader participate sharing the happiness and sorrows of its characters, is inevitably foolish; it will be only an artistic novel that which aim—and achieve with more or less intensity—the supreme result of a total commotion of the consciousness, an emotion that will be the full openness toward the total metaphysic enigma].

There is a line between *Adriana* and *Museo* that distinguishes the "last bad novel" from the "first good novel," but beyond this limit there is a threshold that Macedonio's writing crosses to create a new artistic assemblage. As Deleuze and Guattari point out in *A Thousand Plateaus*, "the limit designates the penultimate marking a necessary rebeginning, and the threshold the ultimate marking an inevitable change" (438). Macedonio establishes a limit, a marginal criterion, from which he determines the value of his writing in *Adriana*. He evaluates this limit in the narrative structure that his writing has created. Thus, he designates *Museo* as the counterpart to *Adriana*—as the first good novel. However *Museo* is not an attempt to overcome *Adriana* and achieve a

higher artistic quality. *Museo* marks the suppression of a previous artistic assemblage and the emergence of a new assemblage with which the writer creates his novel.

My use of assemblages here is meant to evoke what Deleuze explains about a *dispositif* being a tangle: a multilinear ensemble composed by lines, each having a different nature and direction. These lines do not outline or surround systems, rather they make up *dispositifs* as they run through them and pull at them. The lines crossing *dispositifs* trace a balance, rectifying forces which are out of balance by drawing together and then distancing themselves from one another. These forces or points of resistance that are not rectify within a *dispositif* could become lines of fracture drifting toward a threshold beyond which a new assemblage is configured.[28] On the other hand, Deleuze himself derives his understanding of the term from Foucault, who distinguishes three elements in any *dispositif*: knowledge, power and subjectivity.[29] My intention is to study *Museo* as a new *dispositif*, because I seek to explore how the writer creates a new assemblage drawing lines drifting away from a previous artistic assemblage. Furthermore this perspective allows me to examine the process of *subjectivation* that the novel configures, which the writer conceives to fracture the power of the State. Toward the end of this chapter, I will demonstrate that this new *dispositif* inevitably gives raise to new forms of power and knowledge that aim to regulate the process of *subjectivation* within the new assemblage.

Macedonio is convinced that *Museo* will open a new territory for fiction and that it will be a radically new artistic invention that has never been conceived before. Nevertheless, he can only consider *Museo* as "the first good novel," since it is in close proximity to his previous artistic assemblage. Macedonio illuminates this contiguity as he asserts that an original creation cannot completely release itself from previous inventions: "[Es] indudable que las cosas no

[28] See Deleuze, "What is a dispostif?"
[29] See Deleuze's *Foucault*.

comienzan cuando se las inventa. O el mundo fue inventado antiguo" ["Indubitably: things do not begin; or they don't begin when they are created. Or the world was created old" (8; Schwartz 7). Hence, it should be considered that he does not create a new artistic assemblage *ex nihilo*, but rather draws lines that fracture former assemblages.[30] One of his strategies to create this new assemblage consists in deterritorializing the dominant language. Julio Prieto has drawn attention to the high coefficient of deterritorialization that affects Macedonio's writing in *Museo*. Prieto claims that his writing "se caracteriza […] por su inestable residencia en un espacio liminar por un afán de 'desterritorialización' ajeno a todo programa de 'reterritorialización'" (55) [it is characterized by an unstable dwelling in a liminal space, [his writing] aims for a deterritorialisation that is not link to any program of re territorialisation]. He asserts that Macedonio displays in his novel a rhizomatic narrative that vades rigidified territorialities and, flowing in lines of flight, evaporates codified territories. In his novel, Macedonio reduces the sense of language. However, he does not disseminate an incomprehensible polysemy of words. His writing swings through a liminal space lying between a center, in which words convey their more rigidified meanings, and margins beyond which words are released from these meanings. Macedonio plays with language to establish new connections among words and configures a smooth territory for literary language: a space that is no longer overcodified by the dominant language.[31]

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[30] Jitrik writes: "[e]s como si la novela vieja [mala], que es toda la Novela, hubiera tapado una verdad que está en su propio origen y que hay que rescatar" (49). Jitrik explains that Macedonio's attempt to create the first good novel does not imply that he discards all the elements of the old novel, but rather that he transforms these elements in order to create a new novel. This leap, from a bad to a good novel, entails the negation of previous artistic assemblages and, at the same time, the affirmation of their literary elements necessary to create a new literary invention.

[31] Lindstrom asserts that language becomes a target under "Macedonio's massive campaign of irrationalism" (86). She points out that the writer seeks to expose that language is not a reliable vehicle through which the subject of enunciation can convey a rational message. Macedonio's relationship with language as highly subversive one in which language is "being deconstructed and reconstructed in new

Macedonio seeks to create a work of art that is capable of decodifying its underlying strata, its past and present reality, and the codifications imposed by the dominant language. In this sense, he writes: "[l]ibre sin límites sea el arte y todo lo que le sea ajeno, sus letras, sus títulos, el vivir de sus cultores. Tragedia o Humorismo o Fantasía nada deben sufrir de un Pasado director ni copiar una Realidad Presente y todo debe incesantemente jugar, derogar" ["Let art be limitless and free and all that is intrinsic to it—its hand-writing, its titles, the life of its exponents. Tragedy or Humorism or Fantasy should never have to suffer a Past director, nor should they have to copy a Present Reality, and all should incessantly be judged, abolished"] (47; Schwartz 41).[32] His novel is opened up to a game that consists in abrogating codifications and increasing the novel's territory by deterritorializing the dominant language. He believes that art must not reflect reality because it entails a violent constriction of an irreducible multiplicity. As Deleuze and Guattari explain, multiplicity must be created and there does not exist lexical or syntactical

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and ever less communicative ways […]" (87). However Garth claims that Macedonio's attack on language does not stem from its communicative function. He points out that the writer aims to sabotage the power of the person who believes that is possible to define himself/herself through the use of language. He writes: "Macedonio aims to eradicate the sense of the self constituted with the performative use of language. By denying human beings the constitution of themselves as subjects in their use of language, he attempts to eliminate the very concept of the subject" (80). I agree with Garth in that Macedonio sabotages the power of the individual to define itself. However I will demonstrate that, rather than aiming to implode the notion of a subject, he seeks to configure a new process of *subjectivation*, which radically subverts the process of individuation that a central power, such as the power of the State in modern societies, imposes on individual subjects to assign them specific identities and functions.

[32] Deleuze and Guattari argue that in a book there are "lines of articulation or segmentarity, strata and territories; but also lines of flight, movement of deterritorialization and destratification" (3). All these lines flowing in different rhythms and phases configure an assemblage on a plane of consistency. The strata codify, territorialize, and give form to the assemblage. The strata articulate the book as an organism or as signifying a totality, and identify a singular subject as the origin of the enunciation. The *strata* are phenomena that result from a double articulation. Deleuze and Guattari write: "The first articulation chooses or deducts, from unstable particle-flows, metastable molecular or quasi-molecular units ('substances') upon which it imposes a statistical order of connections and successions ('forms'). The second articulation establishes functional, compact, stable structures ('forms'), and constructs the molar compounds in which these structures are simultaneously actualized ('substances')" (see *A Thousands,* 40-41).

cleverness enough to create it. Multiplicity can only be created not by adding higher supplementary dimensions, but instead by subtracting dimensions.

This is the kind of system that Deleuze and Guattari call a "rhizome" (6). The rhizome assumes diverse forms that are always characterized by principles of connection and heterogeneity. Any point of a rhizome can be connected to another one and must be connected. There are not only linguistic features that express these connections, but also semiotic chains of different natures connected to different modes of coding (biological, political, economic, artistic), which bring together different regimes of signs and states of things with different statuses.[33] These chains in a rhizome connect language to "collective assemblages of enunciation," which destabilize the power that has taken control over a dominant language (7). The rhizome always subtracts the dimensions that power has imposed over language to organize and control multiplicity. It constantly establishes connections with collective assemblages of enunciation, however, which converge with and through different points of resistance against power. These connections are lines that fracture the codifications and dimensions that power imposes on multiplicity as it defines a dominant language.[34]

The dominant language is the language of power, which homogenizes, centralizes, and standardizes other languages. However, there are not only two kinds of languages, a major language and a minor language, but rather two possible treatments of the same language. A minor language is not opposed to a major language. Rather, lacking any definitive boundaries,

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[33] Deleuze and Guattari write: "[a] semiotic chain is like a tuber agglomerating very diverse acts, not only linguistic, but also perceptive, mimetic, gestural, and cognitive: there is no language in itself, nor are there any linguistic universals, only a throng of dialects, patois, slangs, and specialized languages" (see *A Thousands,* 7).

[34] Multiplicities are rhizomatic and can only be enunciated collectively because they have neither subjects nor objects. As Deleuze and Guattari write, "[t]here is no unity to serve as a pivot in the object, or to divide in the subject. There is not even the unity to abort in the object or 'return' in the subject. A multiplicity has neither subject nor object, only determinations, magnitudes, and dimensions [….]" (8).

Deleuze and Guattari asserts that it moves through "transitional and limitrophe zones, zones of indiscernibility" (101). Power defines constant relations among the different elements of a major language, whereas a minor language is precisely characterized by continuous variations in the relationships among the different variables that compose it. This opposition is not between constant and variable; the difference relies on how variables are treated. The fundamental distinction between a major and a minor language is the outcome of how they are used and how each of them functions.

There are two conjoined tendencies in a minor language: "an impoverishment, a shedding of syntactical and lexical forms; but simultaneously a strange proliferation of shifting effects, a taste for overloaded and paraphrase" (104). The impoverishment is not a lack, but a void or ellipsis allowing a continuous unfolding of the language and a swerving of its variables to avoid constant relations among them. The overload is not a rhetorical figure, but rather it is a mobile paraphrase that neither projects a metaphor nor provides traces of a solid structure supporting a sentence. It conveys a sort of indirect speech turning to the origin of an enunciation that is impossible to be localized. Deleuze and Guattari write: "[F]rom both sides we see a rejection of reference points, a dissolution of constant form in favor of difference in dynamic" (104). Therefore, the distinction between a major and minor language is a question of becoming. The becoming of the minor language consists in deterritorializing the major language and making it minor.

Macedonio's writing moves toward the becoming of a minor language. It is rhizomatic because it does not cease to decodify the rigidified territory that power imposes on language. It fractures the dominant language by decentering the roots that structure it and by drifting toward other dimensions, other registers, that intensify multiplicity. It releases language from pre-

determined significations and works on it as a deterritorialized flux in which it is possible to forge new semiotic chains, which, rather than pivot around fixed points, create differences in the dynamic of language. In *Museo*, for instance, it is possible to apprehend this becoming of Macedonio's writing as he creates what he defines as "a compound adjective." He claims that he has consulted Xul Solar at his workshop "Idiomas en compostura" ["Language in repair"] to create this compound adjective, which functions to individualize the reader to whom he addresses his novel (45; Schwartz 20).[35] He writes:

> Al «por-todos-nosotros-artistas-servido-de-ensueños» Lector.
>
> Al «tan-soñado» Lector; Al «que-el-autor-sueña-que lee-sus-sueños» Lector.
>
> Al «que-el-arte-escritor-quiere-real-mas sólo-real-lector-de sueños» Lector.
>
> A «lo-único-real-que-el-arte-quiere», el lector de sueños.
>
> A «lo-menos-real, el que sueña sueños de otro, y más fuerte en realidad, pues no la pierde aunque no lo dejan soñar sino sólo re-soñar».
>
> Creo haber individualizado a quien me dirijo: al lector, y haberle conseguido la adjetivación de todo su ser…(45)
>
> The "for-all-of-us-artists-gifted-with-daydreams" Reader.
>
> The "often-dreamed-of" Reader; The "who-the-author-dreams-isreading his dreams" Reader.

[35] In *Papeles de Recienvenido*, Macedonio writes: "[u]na visita del exquisito estrellador de cielos, y de idiomas, Xul Solar, púsome en grave zozobra. Yo contaba estar escribiendo el libro menos entendido del mundo, y él venía a anunciarme que su idioma de incomunicación, su ininteligible neo-criollo, estaría listo antes…Entonces se iba a decir que una vez proporcionado al mundo el idioma de Xul Solar cualquiera podrá escribir libros ininteligibles. Apresuré el mío [*Museo*] y creo haber acreditado que no necesito del idioma de Xul Solar: un pensador puede hacer incomprensible, cualquiera, lo que hasta ahora parecía difícil" (59).

> The "who-the-art-of writing-wants-to-be-real-more-than-merely-real-reader-of-dreams" Reader.
>
> The "only-real-that-art-recognizes" reader of dreams.
>
> The "less-real, he-who-dreams-the-dreams-of-the-other,-and-stronger-in-reality,-since-he-does-not-lose-it-although-they-won't-let-him-dream-them-but-only-re-dream" Reader.
>
> I believe I have identified the reader who addresses himself to me, and I have obtained the proper adjectivalization of this entire being… (Schwartz 40)

These sentences accomplish a more complex task than merely illustrating the common functioning of a compound adjective. They depict the reader and, at the same time, they converge to create the contours of this individual. The sentences, which flow from the contraction "Al" to the adjective/noun "lector," move following the two conjoined tendencies of a minor language. As they erode grammatical rules and structures, they deterritorialize the dominant language, favoring the proliferation of shifting effects in the dynamic of language. Simultaneously, the hyperbolic sequences overload the description of the reader, and consequently it is not possible to derive a clear metaphor for the reader or to clearly perceive the structure that supports these sequences.

The sequences do, however, individualize the reader, as Macedonio claims, although some of them seem to contradict one another. They convey different features of the subject that they create, but none of these can be used as a pivotal axis upon which it is possible to provide a conclusive definition of this subject. It is not possible to distinguish whether Macedonio addresses the actual reader, the reader dreamt by the artist or the reader that becomes a character

in his novel. Nevertheless, we should ask whether the dashes that he uses as if they were ropes that connect the elements that form the sequences are not also used to tie down the actual reader. Is it possible that the subject that he depicts and creates becomes an object of his writing? Does Macedonio evaporate all rigidified territories, as Prieto claims, or does he rather deterritorialize the subject and then reterritorialize it under a new assemblage?

In other cases, Macedonio deterritorializes the dominant language and increases the novel's territory by reshaping specific words, fusing two or more words into a singular expression or placing words in the same sentence in ways that do not follow traditional grammatical structures and rules, so that they communicate alternate meanings. These meanings are sometimes ambivalent. They can remain hermetic, and, at the same time they can irradiate any sense that it is possible to apprehend in them.[36] In *Museo*, the process of deterritorializing the dominant language has different degrees. Its dynamic varies according to the nature of the characters whom the author introduces in the story and the different dimensions that his writing configures for the context in which these characters move. Nevertheless, the example in which he depicts and creates a reader reveals crucial features of his writing. It illuminates the ways he draws independent sequences that, although they may contradict one another, still converge to shape the contours of a subject and at the same time collapse the organic unity of this subject.

The dimensions and characters that Macedonio creates for the novel also encompass this same narrative strategy. *Museo* intertwines independent sequences that meet at crossroads and converge to create the characters and the story. However, rather than a strategy conceived by the author as a singular subject who has decided to unfold this narrative, it may be that this is a becoming of his rhizomatic writing. The novel assembles different pieces that were written by

[36] Piglia points out about Macedonio's writing: "Creación de un nuevo lenguaje como utopía máxima: escribir en una lengua que no existe. El fraseo macedoniano: los verbos en infinitivo; el hiperbatón. La sintaxis arcaizante del habla popular: 'Una gramática onírica'…." (see "Notas," 518).

Macedonio over the course of over twenty-five years.[37] These texts, which were sometimes only published due to the insistence of Macedonio's friends, are not the elements of a historical sequence of his writing that then converge in *Museo*.[38] They are multiple sequences evolving as rhizomes with the world, but their evolution is not parallel to the world. As they converge, they deterritorialize the world and the world effects a reterritorialization of them, which the posthumous publication of the novel ultimately crystallized. The novel in turn deterritorializes itself. It undermines any organic unity and also seems to prevent the proliferation of multiple roots that ramify to support its various dimensions.

The high coefficient of deterritorialization that affects *Museo* is a crucial characteristic that Deleuze and Guattari point out to define Franz Kafka's literature as "minor literature" (16).[39] They claim that one of the conditions through which minor literature can subvert the established literature is to deterritorialize language, but minor literature does not confront "great literature." It creates its own place of underdevelopment and its own language. It configures its own "third world, its own desert" (18). There are only two ways to do this. One way is to conflate in language all the resources of symbolism, "of oneirism, of esoteric sense, of a hidden signifier" (19). The other way moves toward sobriety and reduces the sense of language. Deleuze and Guattari believe that Kafka has chosen the latter way—or that he invented this becoming for his writing. Prieto claims that Macedonio's writing goes further in this same direction, as he pushes

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[37] For instance, Engelbert points out that "Una novela que comienza," which was published in 1921, "is a clear precedent for the radical experimentation undertaken in *Museo*" (50).

[38] Evar Méndez, editor of "Martín Fierro," asserts that the young generation of writers' admiration for Macedonio prevailed and that they were able to snatch away from him some pages of his work and published them. These are the pages that finally provided the bulk of the material included in *Papeles de Recienvenido* (1929).

[39] Deleuze and Guattari claim that there are three characteristics that define a minor literature: "the deterritorialization of language, the connection of the individual to a political immediacy, and the collective assemblage of enunciation" (See Deleuze and *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, 18). I believe that these characteristics are possible to perceive in *Museo*. I will point them out along the development of my analysis of the novel.

language to such an extreme that nothing remains but new intensities vibrating. His writing, folding upon itself, works on language as a malleable material, which ceases to be representative or archetypical; it is never a reproduction or an imitation.

Minor literature does not only deterritorialize language, but it also has a revolutionary political program that opens up a new dimension for an alternative community. However, Prieto does not apprehend a revolutionary component in Macedonio's narrative. He writes: "Macedonio con su extremo cuestionamiento de la realidad de toda entidad subjetiva u objetiva, no parece, ciertamente, contribuir a ningún tipo de 'salida' alineable en una praxis revolucionaria […]" (206) [Macedonio's extreme questioning of reality and of any subjective or objective entity, certainly does not seem to contribute to any form of escaping from reality that can be aligned with a revolutionary praxis]. He asserts that in Macedonio's writing there is no dialectical swing connecting his abstract intellectual production to an actual intervention in history. He believes that the metaphysical commotion that *Museo* engenders opens a space outside of history onto which the author projects a utopian vision of society. Prieto recognizes that this space is in turn re-territorialized, but insists that Macedonio's writing inevitably ties readers to an outside of history through the vertiginous experience that he provokes in readers, which leads them to leave behind their own subjectivities, and hence to transcend history.[40]

[40] Prieto's arguments, as it will be clearly demonstrated in the following pages, are based on Piglia's previous studies on Macedonio's work. Against the grain of these arguments, I will argue that it is possible to follow the re-territorialization of Macedonio's writing in his political position and theory of the state, which, although projecting an utopian community, are not beyond history.

IV. The Double Face of the Community of Conspirators

> They were given the choice of becoming kings or the kings' messengers. As is the way with children, they all wanted to be messengers. That is why there are only messengers, racing through the world and, since there are no kings, calling out to each other the messages that have now become meaningless. They would gladly put an end to their miserable life, but they do not dare to do so because of their oath of loyalty.
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> Franz Kafka, *The Zürau Aphorisms*

In *Museo,* politics emerges at the center of the plot and at the core of the community of conspirators. The novel connects each individual—the characters that dwell in it, the actual author, and the reader—to a political immediacy. In each of these individuals there vibrates a political force that the novel links to the story and intensifies the connection that affects their configuration both through their approach to the novel and their becoming within the story. Deleuze and Guattari argue that this is another characteristic that distinguishes a minor literature: "the connection of the individual to a political immediacy" (*Kafka* 18). In a minor literature, everything is political, because it reveals how individual problems are connected to the juridical and bureaucratic structures, and to social and economic relations. In great literature, these

connections remind hidden in the basement of literary structure. Minor literature, on the contrary, brings to the fore how power determines individuals' lives.

The centrality that politics has in Macedonio's narrative, paradoxically, clearly emerges at the margins of *Museo*. In the appendices and in his personal book notes, which were enclosed in the posthumously published novel, we can find keys with which to develop a political analysis of *Museo*. Macedonio reveals, in one of his notes (dated 1926-27-28), that he thinks the Nation and its history are grandiloquent, fantastic stories. He writes:

> Terminada la novela he pensado proponerla para Historia Nacional a los parlamentos (éstos son siempre más subvencionistas que…de varios pequeños países por considerar que en el mejor de los casos mi libro es mejor novela que la Historia); no sólo obtendré así su venta sino que pronto tendrán pensión todos los personajes o sus deudos pues para eso se hacen las Historias. (320)
>
> [Once that the novel was finished I thought to propose it as National History to the parliaments (these are always more supportive than […] several small countries to consider that in the best case scenario my book is a better novel than history); in this manner I will not only be able to sell it, but also all of its characters will soon have pensions or their relatives, since for this reasons histories are made].

Macedonio links fiction and politics, without defining them as irreducible practices. He believes that both of them create narratives that are interchangeable. Piglia has pointed out the intimate connection between *Museo* and politics. In *Crítica y ficción*, he stresses that the novel subverts the historical narratives that have given shape to the Argentine nation since its origin at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Piglia writes: "[L]a novela mantiene relaciones cifradas con las maquinaciones del poder, las reproduce, usa sus formas, construye su contrafigura utópica" (204) [The novel keeps ciphered relations to the machinations of power, it reproduces them, it uses the forms of power, it creates its utopic counter figure]. *Museo* reproduces the machinations of power because it hatches a conspiracy to capture through a fictional story the individuals who are exposed to its narrative. As the novel erodes the unity of these individuals and molds them into becoming subjects of the community of conspirators, it appropriates and exerts similar mechanisms that political forces use to control the multitudes and gain access to the power of the State.

Nevertheless, the President that emerges at the center of the novel is not a figure invested with the power of the State. Piglia asserts that he is akin to the novelist who creates a fictional narrative that gathers the members of the community of conspirators to achieve a utopian vision. He writes: "[P]orque hay novela hay estado. Estado y novela ¿nacen juntos? En Macedonio la teoría de la novela forma parte de la teoría del estado, fueron elaboradas simultáneamente, son intercambiables" (205) [Because there is a novel there is a State. Are the State and the novel born together? In Macedonio's work the theory of the novel is part of the theory of the State, both of them were elaborated simultaneously and are interchangeable]. But Piglia claims that it is not a question of perceiving the representation of reality in the novel. The question is how to perceive in reality the manifestation of fiction and how to apprehend the ways political power manipulates

fictional narratives to legitimate its regimes. The novel develops a conspiracy to confront and unveil the conspiracy that political power creates. It is a conspiracy against another conspiracy. This line of analysis clearly connects the conspiracy in *Museo* to the actual conspiracy that Macedonio and his group of friends imagined, at the beginning of the 1920s in Buenos Aires.

In this vein, Piglia points out another connection between *Museo* and a concrete political experience that Macedonio had with his group of friends from law school. In 1897, they conceived of founding an anarchist utopian community in Paraguay.[41] The conceptual pillars of Madeconio's ethical and political principles can be studied in his essay, "Para una Teoría del Estado." Although Piglia evidently has read this essay, he appears to derive from Macedonio's literary production both a theory of the novel and a theory of the state. In this manner, he circumscribes Macedonio's theory of the state to the literary realm and situates Macedonio's political position as a utopian vision outside of history. Thus he dislocates the actual political implications of Macedonio's thought.

However, as Obieta points out, in Macedonio's epistolary it is quite possible to trace his enthusiasm for actual social and political interventions in his milieu. Obieta argues that his father offers concrete criticism of the social and political system, as well as advocating actual political positions that should be assumed facing this system. In his theory of the State, Macedonio condenses his political position. He develops a radical defense of the individual against the

[41] After the death of Macedonio's father his mother's house continued to be a meeting place for intellectuals such as Juan B. Justo, José Ingenieros, Cosme Mariño, Leopoldo Lugones and Jorge Borges, among others. Macedonio and his brother, Adolfo, also participated in the meetings. Jo Anne Engelbert writes: [i]t is probable that the idea of establishing a Utopian colony in Paraguay was first suggested by some member of this *tertulia*. This experiment in Spencerian socialism was to take place on an island […]" (10). The experiment seems to have failed due to the inclemency of the jungle mosquitos. Nevertheless, Engelbert insists that "[t]he dream of fraternity of kindred spirits did not perish, however, and Macedonio cherished throughout his lifetime the idea of achieving such a union. He realized the dream literarily, at least, in the communal life of the spirit depicted in *Museo* […]" (10).

power of the State, which may be tempered by considering the global historical contexts of totalitarian political regimes. For instance, he harshly criticizes socialist doctrines because they encourage a coercive solidarity that these doctrines believe should be imposed by the power of the State. Macedonio particularly emphasizes that socialist doctrines promote the trend of a growing State, which causes "la usurpación del Individuo, la traición del Estado a su representado el Individuo […] " (124) [the seizure of the Individual, the treason of the State to its constituency: the individual]. Macedonio is convinced that the individual is more lucid when isolated. He disapproves of unions, political parties, or any form of political representation because he thinks that they degenerate the faculties of the individual.

Macedonio advocates for a State that reduces to a minimum the restrictions of an individual's liberties. He believes that such a minimal State is beneficial not only for the individual, but also for the economy. It also prevents the State's abuse of coercive powers. Rather than a big State that regulates all social interactions, there should be a minimal, but strong State that administrates and distributes wealth, but without a great bureaucratic system. Macedonio believes that when the community is well educated and has a high cultural level of development, the State should be as minimal as possible. He believes that the democratic system is only a symbol of equality. It is just an illusion that we are all equals. He claims that we should accept the democratic system because it promotes some fraternity, but only until those who are in power guarantee that they will hand over their power to individuals. After that, Macedonio asserts, the government should no longer be subjected to democratic elections.

Macedonio's actual ideological and political position, which aims to promote a program with which to intervene in his concrete social and political milieu, can be articulated through a literary analysis of his novel. As it has been mentioned before, at the margins of *Museo* we can

still find new keys with which to problematize the political implications of Macedonio's writing. In one of the appendices, it seems that there is still hidden an intertexuality that the author intertwines in the novel—or a strong resonance between his work and Kafka's literature—that can shed new light on the ciphered connections between *Museo* and politics.[42] In this text, Macedonio first depicts a General who hesitantly moves through darkness on the underground stairs of "la Casa de la Novela," as he is guided by *la Eterna* (269).[43] Then Macedonio tells us that *la Eterna*, on a non-windy day, had sent a messenger to cross the entire city. The messenger, with one arm in a splint and one paralytic hand, had to carry a burning candle, holding it with the contraction of his fingers. Once in the city, nobody helped him to blow the candle out and he got burned. He could not do it by himself because, as a character in the story, he was breathless after he had fulfilled the requirements demanded of him by the novel.[44] Macedonio writes:

> Hecho cenizas heroicas quedó en un relicario el mensajero, pero no porque el porteño no sea el más benévolo y apiadado de los hombres sino porque tanto catedrático, tanto escritor, tanto periodista, tanto político, capitalista, comunistas,

[42] Macedonio considers Kafka as one of the best writers in modern prose. He writes about him in letters to his friends. In one of this letter for Nicolás Olivari, dated February 1946, he recommends Kafka's work and asks his friend's opinion about it. He writes: "…tengo al mismo tiempo en examen el libro de Gómez de la Serna, el de usted y el de Supervielle (¿Qué piensa usted de Supervielle? Dígamelo. Para mí es el poeta poemista más original, sin aparatosidad que leí. Y Kafka: ¡genio, genio! Escríbame sobre algo de esto)" (OC, II, 109). In a letter for Juan Pinto, in 1949, he writes: "Admiro a Kafka, Gómez de la Serna y Supervielle" (OC, II, 189).

[43] Obieta points out that in the novel the general seems to be replaced by el *Presidente*, who is also characterized by his insecurity and dependency of la *Eterna*. He also asserts: "no se descartan lecturas satíricas de la historia argentina" (see *Museo* footnote b, 269), which, needless to say, alludes to the General Juan Domingo Perón and his wife, Eva Duarte.

[44] In *Museo*, the author attributes this same mission to an invention of Quizagenio, when the group of conspirators carries out different ludic interventions in the city to invest Buenos Aires with beauty and mystery (201).

> nuevas y viejas religiones, penicilinistas, tienen a los porteños tan llenos de prometimientos y faltos de realidades y sinceridades ¡que desconfiaron del mensajero! ¡Que desconfiaron de la Eterna! y al mensajero más enternecedor que jamás hubo le mezquinaron el mínimo que es un soplo de ayuda". (269-270)
>
> [made heroic ashes in a locket was the messenger, but not because the *porteño* is not the most benevolent and pity kind of man, but because as professors, writers, journalists, politicians, capitalists, communists, new and old religions, and penicillinists, give to the the *porteños* plenty of promises, which are lacking of reality and sincerity, they distrusted the messenger! They distrusted the Eternal!; and they skimped the minimum, which is a breath of help, to most soulful messenger that had ever been].

What was the message that *la Eterna* delivered? Was it an order that the General had imparted or was she the one who guided the General's decisions? If there was a message delivered it seems that it did not reach its addressee. The messenger, as a character invented by the novel and for the novel, has to follow the order that *el General* or *la Eterna* has given to him and is limited by the form and capacities that were designed for him. Although "*los porteños*" are benevolent people, they could not help him because, as they are determined and captured by other narratives that assigned them certain capacities and functions, just as the novel has done with the messenger, they cannot trust him or *la Eterna*.

It is interesting to consider the parallel between this messenger and the recurrent figure of the messenger in Kafka's literature. Juan Carlos Foix has pointed out this correspondence, as he

describes Macedonio's messenger as a "kafkiano emisario que, portador de la clave de un destino, sale […]" [a kafkian emissary that carrying the key of a fate goes out]; but a messenger who never reaches his destination (21). Foix claims that the relationship between the literary productions of both authors should be further analyzed. Although he does not develop this line of analysis in much depth, he points out some revealing resonances between the two. He argues that their works exist as a furious excrescence, which is a sort of anomalous growth. At the same time, the unfolding of their works is constantly obstructed. Thus, the main subject of their literary production becomes the impossibility of apprehending the original source of their work. It is not possible to gain access to the primordial knowledge that originated their enterprises. Foix writes: "Rastreando ambas producciones literarias ha de encontrarse en seguida el mismo mensajero de la vela. En ambas sucede tan sólo lo impertinente, es decir, lo que sucede es lo que le impide suceder a lo que por debajo de ello se presiente pugnando por conseguirlo" (22). [Tracing both literary productions it will be possible to find right away the same messenger holding a candle. In both of them it only happens the impertinent, i.e. that what happens is what prevents to what is underneath and it is possible to perceive to actually happen].

In the short story "The Great Wall of China," Kafka introduces a parable (also separately published as "A Message From the Emperor"), in which there is a messenger who resembles the courier that *la Eterna* sends out into the city. The short story is divided into two parts. In the first section, the narrator explains the particular principles of piecemeal construction that were used, after many years of planning, to build the wall. The Great Wall of China was built in discontinuous sections of one thousand yards each by two teams working from opposite ends. Hence, until the completion of the wall there were huge gaps between the different sections. It is assumed that the wall was intended to protect the settled people of China from the constant

incursions of nomadic people from the north. In the second part of the story, Kafka's narrator recounts his memories about being trained at school to build walls. He also depicts the massive mobilization of workers throughout the territory to keep building the different segments of the wall. He describes their rejoicing, as workers traveled to the farthest leagues of China, and how they felt that their labor helped to forge a unity that bonded the community. Nobody knew where the high command that led the construction was located. But the narrator believes that through the windows of this office, in which "all human thoughts and desires revolved in a circle, and all human aims and fulfillments in a countercircle," divine guidance illuminated the plan of their leaders (271).

Why, then, did the high command decide to build the wall in sections? Why did they mobilize thousands of people from the south of China, who—due to the enormous distance between them and the people of the north—were safe from the threat of foreign invasion? Although the high command could have overcome the difficulties of continuous construction, it had deliberately decided upon a fragmentary construction of the wall. The narrator points out that during those years it might have been dangerous to question the command's decisions. However, in the report that he is writing, he claims that he seeks to find answers to this question. He knows that the high command knew and controlled everything about the people's life. Their leaders and their decision to build the wall had existed from all eternity. But the workers themselves knew that the people of north were not the reason behind such a vast enterprise.

He explains that certain traditions and institutions in China are unique in their clarity, but that others are enveloped in obscurity, and that "one of the most obscure of our institutions is that of the empire itself" (274). The figure of the Emperor is omnipresent in the imaginary of the people. Peking, the center of the empire, is just one dot in the vast landmass of China, and its

power can stretch, but people living at a great distance from the capital may have never been actually touched by its power. Concentric rings of nobles and courtiers surround the Emperor, sometimes providing advice and other times conspiring to overthrow him. Nevertheless, the people may never know whether the leader whom they think is ruling the Empire has been executed or if another dynasty has risen to power. They may never see an officer of the Empire, but for them the Emperor's power is immortal.

The parable "A Message from the Emperor" illustrates the latter situation. Kafka writes: "The Emperor, so it runs, has sent a message to you, the humble subject, the insignificant shadow cowering in the remotest distance before the imperial sun [….]" (275). The messenger kneels down by the Emperor's bed and listens to his dying voice whispering the message that he must deliver. The messenger immediately departs on his journey, "a powerful, an indefatigable man; now pushing with his right arm, now with his left, he cleaves a way for himself through the throng; if he encounters resistance he points to his breast, where the symbol of the sun glitters; the way is made easier for him than it would be for any other man" (274-275). However, the multitudes are so vast that he cannot reach the open fields. He is still trying to find his way through the chambers of the innermost palace. He will never get out of them, but even if he succeeds nothing will be gained. He will have to cross still other courts, the second outer palace, and then more stairs. The parable concludes: "Nobody could fight his way through here even with a message from a dead man. But you sit at your window when evening falls and dream it to yourself" (276).

The narrator says that his people from the south do the same thing regarding their Emperor. They obliterate him in the present, but still they are fully affected by his power. For them, "Peking and its Emperor are one, a cloud […] peacefully voyaging beneath the sun in the

course of the ages" (278). He claims that it is the Empire's fault that institutions do not reach or cannot influence the farthest frontiers of the territory. But it is also a fault on the part of the people's weak imaginative power, because they cannot raise the Empire from its actual setting in Peking and embrace it as a palpable living reality. However, he believes that the people's highest desire is to be touched at least once by the Empire's power, and then to die.

The apprehension of power is just a mirage and hence impossible to actually grasp. In this sense, Jane Bennett points out that in Kafka's story the whole point of the wall relies on the idea of closure that it provides to the community of China, while the fragmentary constructions "maximize the *illusion* of completeness" (656). She observes that the story illuminates self-deception as an "integral part of the ideas of territorial security and community" (656). The architectures' plan is to contain multiplicity and make it manageable for specific purposes within its own territory. The alleged threat of the people from the north just serves a function for this plan. Bennett asserts that in the story power remains shrouded in obscurity due to the vast geographical landmass of China, "but it is also a result of a semiotic distance" (656). However, there are lines of territorialization that cross the capital of the Empire and traverse all the vast territory of China to strike the bodies of the subjects of the Empire, as in the subject who sits at his window waiting. In spite of the impossibility of the people's embracing the Empire as a vivid experience, its power still determines their imaginary about its existence.

Macedonio's messenger resembles Kafka's messenger, but as a negative reflection or as a caricature of the Emperor's messenger. *La Eterna*, not the General who is wandering lost in the dark undergrounds of "La Novela," delivers the message. The people from the city do not trust the messenger or *La Eterna*, because they are under the influence of other narratives. While Kafka's messenger is a powerful and indefatigable man, Macedonio's messenger is a disabled

man. Rather than having the symbol of the sun emblazoned on his chest— the symbol of the Empire that should open all paths for him—Macedonio's messenger is carrying a burning candle that nobody in the city actually cares about. The message of the Emperor in the parable cannot actually reach its addressee, but his power is still able to determine the lives of his subject. *La Eterna*'s message does not reach anybody and there is not any subject waiting for this message. Nevertheless, Kafka's and Macedonio's stories converge in the following decisive coincidence. In the former, after the messenger departs to accomplish his mission, there is no longer a sovereign. In the latter, the figure of power is absent from the beginning. In both stories, at some point, there are no longer sovereigns, only messengers.[45]

For both Kafka and Macedonio, the messenger seems to crystallize an element functioning within a vast system of power, which remains enshrouded in darkness. It also seems to announce the forms of power already knocking at their doors: capitalism, fascism, populism, Stalinism. They listen to the noise of these new political machines that insert themselves into the old assemblages and break with them from within. Their literary abstract machines measure the modes of existence and the reality of these assemblages. Their narratives map the ways in which these new forms of power recodify their territory and capture desire to redirect it to fixed points at which individuals must converge: the consumption of goods, the destiny of the land, the blood of a nation, the consecration of the ruling sovereign and thereby of his subjects. In their maps,

[45] In Kafka's famous novel, "The Castle," there is also a messenger, Barnabas. He works for the castle, but the figure of power behind the messages and orders that he delivers to the central character of the novel, "K," remains in absolute obscurity and indeterminacy. In *Continuación de la Nada*, in a section entitled "El cartero delicioso," Macedonio asserts that if he were a dictator he would impart two executive orders: "una de ignominia y otra de gloria" (100). The former will be to punish the bureaucrat who has invented the fifty anniversaries, which inspire people to name avenues, squares, statues, etc. The latter will be to order to build a statue for a mailman or ask the director of the mail service to create a commemorative stamp in his honor, which should be used only for the letters that are never sent. The mailman had been convicted, because he burned hundreds of letters. It may be possible to think that for Macedonio the mailman should be honored because he has betrayed the system of power that he seems to represent.

however, there are always lines of flight undoing the lines of territorialization and segmentation imposed by these central powers. Neither Kafka nor Macedonio cease to follow with their narratives lines that escape from the codified territory, as they create contiguous deterritorialized spaces to inhabit.

The movement of the message in Kafka's parable illustrates a subject who is the origin of an enunciation and is invested with power, and a potential subject of the statement who should be affected by the enunciation. The content of the message is irrelevant, but the messenger reveals the absence and always-necessary presence of these two subjects. Deleuze and Guattari explain that "[t]he message doesn't refer back to an enunciating subject who would be its cause, no more than to a subject of the statement who would be its effect" (*Kafka* 18). The message illuminates that the link that emerges between the subject of the enunciation and the subject of the statement is a line of territorialization that codifies this connection. As does the messenger that *La Eterna* sends to the city, who fails because there are other messengers: "catedrático […] escritor […] periodista […] politico […] capitalista […] comunistas" (269-270) [scholar…writer…journalist…politician…capitalists…communist] already operating in this space, *Museo* also exposes the codifying lines that these messengers deliver. Macedonio aims to release individuals from these territorializing lines, which are configured and triggered by central powers. Thus he creates semiotic chains that project an alternative community in which there are not lines of territorialization descending from either a sovereign, an institution or their messengers, inscribed upon people's lives and bodies. Instead, in the novel, there are collective assemblages of enunciation that corrode these structures of power.[46]

[46] However we should also examine how Macedonio's narrative, rather than a pure deterritorializing flux, can also trigger codifying lines. As he says, writers are also messengers. Thus we should consider what

This is another central characteristic that defines a minor literature: all statements, including those of the author, constitute a common action, which form collective assemblages of enunciation. Deleuze and Guattari write: [T]he political domain has contaminated every statement (*énoncé*). But above all else, because collective or national consciousness is 'often inactive in external life and always in the process of break-down,' literature finds itself positively charged with the role and function of collective, and even revolutionary enunciation" (17). The national consciousness and the history of the nation's foundation are fictional narratives imposed on the people's lives. Macedonio believes that he can locate cracks in these narratives in which to develop his writing as a way of subverting the national consciousness and the regimes of enunciation that form the history of a nation. His writing undermines the narratives that support the formation of a national identity and the formation of the nation-State. He seeks to awaken people's imaginations in order to engage them in an active solidarity capable of collectively imaging an alternative way of living together. Deleuze and Guattari point out that "[i]f the writer is in the margins or completely outside his or her fragile community, this situation allows the writer all the more the possibility to express another possible community and to forge the means for another consciousness and another sensibility" (17). Macedonio personifies this figure of an absent writer who, withdrawing from society at large and from the most visible intellectual circles, advocates for artistic expressions that can stimulate new forms of perception with which to conceive and project another possible community.

In his novel, Macedonio creates collective assemblages of enunciation that set up revolutionary conditions that could promote this alternative community. There is a beautiful passage in *Museo* that illustrates how these assemblages function. Dulce-Persona and

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are the lines of territorialization crossing the new assemblage that Macedonio's writing creates. This hypothesis will be addressed toward the conclusion of this section.

Quizagenio, two characters and members of the community of conspirators, are heard talking about their own feelings. Quizagenio says: "[E]stoy triste […] siento el desmayo de ser sólo escrito, cuando pudiera no escrito sino real estar así" ["I'm heartbroken. I feel the dizziness of existing only in writing, when I could be here not in writing but in reality"] (168; Schwartz 158). He yearns to be alive, because he is in love. But he asks Dulce-Persona to request the author to write about them (the characters) only when they are suffering. He is terrified that the author may cease writing while he is feeling love and that he will be vanished, as when movies end with the lovers kissing and the images fades away. But Dulce-Persona does not talk to the author, instead she addressed the reader: "[L]ector, necesito tu calidez, tu aliento sobre esta página de desaliento. Inclínate más, es tan triste toda existencia" ["Reader, I need you to breathe on this breathles page. Lean in more; all existence is so sad" (169; Schwartz 158). The reader answers: "Cómo cambiaría yo mi pesadez terrena por un ser de tu levedad […] ¡Valiera la vida para prestar su hálito a un personaje atribulado!" ["I'll trade my leaden earth for your levity!...Whould that my life was worth lending you, was character-worthy!"(169; Schwartz 158). Dulce-Persona concludes the dialogue: "[Y]a es bastante con que uno a otro nos pensemos" ["It's enough that we each think of each other"] (169; Schwartz 158). Dulce-Persona radically subverts the power hierarchy of the narrative structure. She does not ask for the author's help, although the author theoretically holds the power to change the characters' fates, but asks instead for the intervention of the reader, who can supposedly only follow a story that cannot be changed.

In the passages quoted above we can perceive how a collective assemblage of enunciation functions to inspire reciprocity and solidarity. All entities are configured through a common action. As Dulce-Persona asks for the reader's intervention, she does not only seem to ask for his/her encouragement to face her sad feelings, she also seems to plead for the reader's

breath to make her become alive. However, she also gives life to the reader as a character in the novel. The actual readers, ultimately, are who illuminate the sequence and have the power to end the story. If Macedonio has achieved his goals, these readers—rather than reading a dialogue in which there is a character who represents them—will read themselves. Hence all of the entities exist on the same plane of consistency, on which they constitute themselves through and by the presence of all of the other entities and express themselves in a mutual becoming.

In *Museo* the community of conspirators expresses an alternative community through collective assemblages of enunciation, which unveil and dismantle the mechanisms that tie individuals to the power of the State in contemporary societies. After the prologues, when the author sets the novel in motion, he reveals that only fantasy has drawn together the members of the community. Macedonio writes: "[F]antasía une aquí en la novela y en la estancia como a viajeros que el azar junta en un vagón que corre, a todos los personajes traídos a esta narrativa […]" ["Fantasy unites all the characters of this narrative, here in the novel and in the estancia, like travelers brought together by chance in the same runway stage-coach"] (129; Schwartz 128). *El Presidente* plays a leading role in the community, as he decides every night which missions the group will carry out the following day, but he is also open to listening to the other characters and enjoys their voices, which inspire him and lay the foundation of their friendship. He is constituted and reconfigured by the other members of the community, as much as he affects the other characters. He does not determine the characters' individual identities. The novel creates each of these identities as their personalities unfold and intersect, which in turn marks the becoming of each character. The only character who seems to stand on a different plane is *La Eterna*. She particularly moves *el Presidente*. Sometimes she dwells in the shadows of "La Novela" and hides from the other characters. Other times she guides the community in its

missions as if she were a gentle ghost. In other passages, she emerges with a similar consistency of other characters and participates with them in their incursions into the city.

El Presidente informs the members of the community about the plans to intervene in the city every night and tells them that after they leave the house they have to spread out, each following his or her own path. Although the characters' assignments seem to be ciphered, his instructions insinuate that the characters have to look for sort of affections to bring back to "La Novela." For instance, Quizagenio has to "recoger el secreto que se dice, pero en «secreto»" ["Collect the secret that is told, but in «secret»"] (132; Schwartz 129). The specific nature of the missions assigned seems to be irrelevant. The point is that the collective mission links the different characters and makes them converge in a mutual becoming. The characters and their missions are different threads intertwined to create the plot. While they are following their own independent paths into the city, they feel as if they were real. But also for this reason, they are eager to come back to "La Novela," where they are fulfilled by their shared friendship and by the joint becoming that founds their community.

As the novel develops, the characters' movements draw the contours of the different dimensions in which the story takes place. Nonetheless, until Buenos Aires emerges for the first time, reflected on the sensual and innocent body forms of Dulce-Persona, the only actual space depicted in the novel is the country house and its surroundings. As already quoted, Macedonio writes: "[…] Buenos Aires, suprema ciudad merodeada por las sombras de campos sin límites, viviendo a oscuras de su destino, como el transatlántico, iluminado, en la vasta oscuridad del mar en cuyo seno se avanza; en ambos se vive sin noción de rumbo, por tanto con entero sentido del presente […]"["Buenos Aires, that prowling through the shadows of the limitless land, living in the darkness without destiny, like an ocean liner, illuminated in the vast darkness of the sea

whose heart it claves; both live directionless, in the fullness of the present"] (135; Schwartz 132). He asserts that when a city lives historically, i.e., is focused only on human evolution, it does not leave room for Passion, which cannot be felt as long as it is circumscribed by a specific space or time. Buenos Aires, on the contrary, could be absolutely immersed in its present. Thus he believes that it opens a space for quixotic interventions.

One night, after two years of living together in "La Novela," *El Presidente* tells the members of the community that the friendship that they have shared has not been enough to give him a sufficient sense of fate and dignity. He is convinced that only Passion can provide this. Hence, he concludes that it is time for action: "la conquista de Buenos Aires para la Belleza" ["the conquest, through Beauty, of Buenos Aires"] (194; Schwartz 177). *El Presidente*'s revelation shocks his friends. Although they agree on participating in his plan to conquer the city, they know that the time to leave "La Novela" behind forever is fast approaching. Macedonio writes: "La amistad abría los ojos viendo fantasmas; se les llenaron los ojos de fantasmas a los amigos; la mirada en vacío a la proposición del Presidente" ["Friendship opened windows on to phantasms; it filled the friends' eyes with phantasms; the gaze became empty again at the President's proposition"] (196; Schwartz 178). *El Presidente* has understood the city's history and fate. He has been ruminating for a long time about how to save Buenos Aires. He thinks that first a cultural purge will be necessary to change some behaviors of the people toward their past, because rather than living with Passion in the present they have become numb by resting on the shoulders of the national founding fathers.

As *el Presidente* conceives his plan, he also pays close attention to a conflict that has been sparked in the city between two groups: *Eternecientes* and *Hilarantes*. Each of these groups

aims to dominate the other by imposing its literary style.[47] They have disseminated in the city various grotesque devices that have disturbed the daily life of the people and consequently have divided the people into two factions, each of which supports one group.[48] *El Presidente* is forced to intervene in the "theater of operation," as the people of Buenos Aires think that his group has performed one of these interventions. He believes that the fundamental disagreement between the two groups relies on some mistakes that have been made in the city regarding its aesthetic taste. He also wonders whether the lack of a beautiful historical event in the city's past could have fostered this confrontation. He convenes the two factions and persuades them to abandon their conflict, then to direct their forces toward a common effort. It is after he succeeds in this mediation that he organizes his own group to conquer Buenos Aires. The community of conspirators carries out different incursions in the city. These interventions, as if they were surrealist happenings aimed at creating a new aesthetic sensitivity, provoke a dissonant alteration of the people's experiences. The ultimate goal of these artistic, ludic, and humorous interventions is political. *El Presidente* had plotted that the people, living under a constant alteration of their perceptions, will yearn for his help to save them.

Nevertheless, this machination, as Horacio González says, was not intended to subjugate the people, but to achieve utopian salvation and cosmic manumission (*Filosofía* 123). The city is released from its own ugliness and its painful history is suppressed. All statues are removed and

[47] It may be possible to consider that these two groups allude ironically to the confrontation between the actual groups of young writers, Florida and Boedo.

[48] Garth writes: "[w]hat is most striking about the competing gangs in this episode of *Museo* is their manipulation of shared cultural assumptions about individual identity. Both groups act to reinforce and frustrate, simultaneously, the public's faith in identity as equivalent to an autonomous self. Both simultaneously reinforce and frustrate the public conception of the self as identifiable in *images* of one's own persona" (109). Garth's words specifically address a device that one group has installed in the city: a mirror that distorts people's images. He also provides, as it will be further developed, a metaphor for one of the central themes that he points out in the novel. His work particularly focuses on how Macedonio's writing resists mechanisms of power that aim to impose a specific image upon individuals and assign the attributes that correspond to each of them.

the city's system of nomination, i.e., the names of geographical features such as streets, squares, and monuments, is changed to express different affections, feelings, and thoughts. Thereby, the people's relationship with their past is modified. The city now lives solely in a flowing present and the cultural depuration dissolves the dispute between formerly antagonistic groups. *El Presidente* sees that the city has been conquered by beauty and mystery. However, after the operation has been accomplished, he wakes up one day in "La Novela" and realizes that the city's ugliness is irreversible. He concludes that the conquest of Buenos Aires has not changed his soul. He gathers his friends and informs them that he has decided to leave "La Novela." As he thinks that nobody would like to stay in the country house, he asks them to leave and to scatter about. They finally leave "La Novela," without looking in each other's faces.

It seems that the community of conspirators has failed because it has not changed the city's destiny. However, the conspiracy succeeds in revealing the power of fictional narratives to draw people to live together. Macedonio illuminates how individuals are subjected to a process of individuation that a central power has imposed on them, and he creates a community that is the antidote for this process. The novel therefore reaffirms the power of fiction to create an alternative community, which, rather than defending a central power, as in the power of the State, creates a narrative that disperses this power. The coming together of the alternative community is not caused by an external power that defines each individual. This community, which also includes the author and the reader, is configured through collective assemblages of enunciation in which all of the elements are connected and affected by each other. The readers have the power to intervene in these assemblages, in an intervention that is limited only by their imaginations and their capacity to be affected by the story.

Macedonio believes that we can only perceive power through the effects that power produces. For him an individual's identity, the self, is an effect of power. He believes that the idea of an autonomous self is an empty notion on which, nonetheless, societies are built. Hence, in his novel he undertakes a reworking of the individual to eradicate the self. Todd Garth explains that the " '[s]elf,' for Macedonio, is the function of institutions and establishments, and serves largely to legitimize and perpetuate them. He considers self a concept as deleterious to the individual as it is artificial to human nature" (47).[49] The dislocation of the self, then, should lead to the foundation of an alternative community in which power relations will not determine individuals' identities. On the contrary, each individual in this community will be able to establish relationships with other individuals based on ethical principles. Garth points out that these principles rest on Macedonio's libertarian political position, which resists the power of the State and champions the power of the individual.

In order to fully understand the foundation of Macedonio's ethical and political position, the metaphysical reflection that sustains it must also be addressed. As Jo Anne Engelbert points out, "[a]ny attempt to penetrate the world of la Eterna must begin with an examination of Macedonio's fundamental metaphysical assumptions, especially his ideas concerning the nature of the self" (60). While he neglects the notion of an autonomous individual identity, he also negates the non-self. In *Museo* he writes: "[S]oy el imaginador de una cosa: la no muerte; y la trabajo artísticamente por la trocación del yo, la derrota de la estabilidad de cada uno en su yo"

[49] In an interview, which is published in *Power and Knowledge*, Foucault clearly expresses a similar thought, as he explains the scope of his research project in his book *History of Sexuality*. He says: "What I want to show is how power relations can materially penetrate the body in depth without depending even on the mediation of the subject's own representations" (see, *History of Sexuality. Volume 1: an introduction,* 186). Power defines our own identity without the mediation of our own representation. Macedonio radicalizes this idea. He believes that we cannot even apprehend our own identity. The representation of ourselves is only possible through the definitions that other people provide to us. Thus it should be dislocated and discarded.

["This is what I imagine here: non-death; also the artistic work involved in the transformation of the self, routing the stability of each person in his self"] (32; Schwartz 28). These two elements of his thinking: the decentering of the self and the negation of death, converge fused in the central character of *La Eterna*. She opens up an ineffable experience in the novel, which Macedonio addresses using equally cryptic language, and her presence impels an ethical and mystical experience. Her first steps into the novel create the trail leading toward this experience. At the beginning of the book, the author dedicates his novel to this character, and says that he has met her with the most intense momentum of love, friendship, and compassion.

Macedonio asserts that it is not possible to use words to express or understand the fulminous, total impulsiveness of *La Eterna*'s act of mercy. In the dedication to his novel, he writes about the experience of how she enlightened him when he first encountered her:

> La Realidad y el Yo, o principalmente el yo, la Persona (haya o no Mundo) sólo se cumple, se da por el momento altruístico de la piedad (y de la complacencia) sin fusión, en pluralidad. El acto no instintivo de Piedad, reteniéndose el lúcido discernimiento de pluralidad, sin confusión del Otro con el Nosotros, es la finalidad de Haber Algo y es lo sólo ético: ser todavía en el hacerlo todo por otro. (5)
>
> Reality and the I, or principally the I, the Individual (whether or bot the World exists) only gives itself fully in the altruistic moment of mercy (and of satisfaction) only gives itself fully in the altruistic moment of mercy (and of satisfaction) without fusion, that is, in plurality. The end point of What Is, of World, and is its only ethic is the non-instinctive act of Mercy,

> keeping for itself the lucid discernment of plurality, without confusing the Other with itself: to still be other, while living for another. (Schwartz 3)

La Eterna communicates a secret, and to apprehend it one must participate in a sort of ethical transcendence. The individual who perceives her is first decentered and then is brought back to oneself, back to its solitude, to reaffirm oneself. The "self"—without fusing or losing itself into plurality—is reconfigured now ethically devoted to doing everything for a radical Other. The "I" that recognizes the infinitely Other reaffirms itself in this act, which compels the individual to still be Other, while living for another. Hence, rather than the implosion of the notion of the self, it seems that *Museo* aims first to strike the individual identity's stability and then to reconfigure it. *La Eterna* provokes a dislocation of the "self," which is then reassembled based on the ethical experience that her presence engenders.

The destabilization of the self and the negation of the non-self emerge fused in the character of *La Eterna* through the particular relation to the future that her presence conveys. The encounter with her involves a relation to the future that remains undetermined. In one prologue, Macedonio asserts that all of his being has been defined by the act of waiting for her arrival, but he explains that she is impossible to conceive beforehand. He addresses her by saying: "El todo-amor que tú eres," ["The all-love that you are"] as if her presence emerged in the novel as an eternal present (21; Schwartz 18). In this sense, Macedonio imagines the *nunc stans* encounter between the lover's smile and *La Eterna's* smile: "unidas ambas sonrisas por un tiempo todo presente, un tiempo inmarchitable que alientos no corrompan" ["finding for a time that both smiles were fresh and unite in an ever-present time, an adamantine time that breath cannot corrupt"] (23; Schwartz 20). Her presence *presses* upon the present, but it is not possible to

describe it as being the present. She is neither given in advance, nor possible to interpret. She opens up the present, going beyond the continuity of time and expressing an imperishable love.

Macedonio claims that *La Eterna* can only be depicted in a singular way. But rather than providing a description of her, he addresses the enigmatic affections that she provokes, which safeguards her from any actual determinacy. For instance, he points out that as she disavows the past of the one who apprehends her and provides this individual with an alternative history; she also grants this person a future, which while remaining ciphered and secret will be the only future that one who is devoted to her would ever like to have or to know. Following Derrida, in *A Taste for the Secret*, it is possible to posit that *La Eterna* "enacts a kind of opening," leaving an empty space for who is to come: the *arrivant,* someone absolutely indeterminate (31). She provokes an irruption of a future that is not possible to announce beforehand or to appropriate. Derrida would say that she "overflows everything that is and that is present, the entire field of being and beings, and the entire field of history –is committed to a promise or an appeal that goes beyond being and history" (20). *La Eterna* does not work on the present of the individual who apprehends her. Instead, it is within a hollow, which cannot be located in a specific point of time or space, that she resonates. She reaffirms a relationship with a future that has to have the shape of the Other, which is always still to come and is impossible to appropriate.

As Macedonio states in his dedication to *La Eterna,* the relation to the Other should not be understood as a closed structure, but as a relationship to multiplicity and plurality that cannot be fused into unity. Derrida asserts that multiplicity and alterity are revealed "as the absolute solitude of the existent in its existence" ("Violence and Metaphysics," 89). An encounter with *La Eterna* illuminates the Other's radical exteriority and suspends one's ability to appropriate it. The individual who perceives her, without confusing himself/herself with the Other, liberates the

Other from any violent constrictions. At the same time, he/she releases himself/herself from any form of reduction and is brought back to himself/herself, back to his/her solitude. It is from the depth of this solitude and separation that the relationship to the Other emerges as a primordial secret. In this sense, Emmanuel Levinas writes: "[I]f one could possess, grasp, and know the other, it would not be other. Possessing, knowing, and grasping are synonyms of power" (51). It is precisely the encounter with the radical Other that can liberate it from violent constrictions, such as the boundaries of space or of language, but this encounter must also be conceived as a form of separation, which maintains distance and interrupts all totalities.

Macedonio conjures the encounter with the absolute plurality of the radical Other as a primordial secret that interrupts all forms of social constrictions and births the ethical act of being Other while living for another, an Other always still to come as an undetermined future. It is precisely here, Derrida claims, "in that which ties together as non-reappropriable the future and radical otherness – that justice, in a sense that is a little enigmatic, analytically participates in the future. Justice has to be thought of as what overflows law [droit], which is always an ensemble of determinable norms, positively incarnated and positive" (*A Taste* 21). The ethical and mystical experience that the encounter with *La Eterna* engenders can only affect a singular entity that, within a secret and inner experience, perceives the radical Other's exteriority. As it apprehends the ungraspable plurality of the Other, the "I" reaffirms itself in its solitude. Hence, the transcendental ethic that this encounter brings to light cannot engender any form of social bond, normativity, or written law. In fact, it can function for the dissolution of the social pact that undergirds modern societies and it can question any form of power that imposes external relationships on individuals and regulates them.

In this sense, it may be interesting to ask if the conspiracy to imbue Buenos Aires with mystery is intended not to save the city, but rather to dissolve it. For this reason, perhaps, the conspiracy failed to change the city's destiny. It is able to dislocate the city's axis, but it cannot create for the citizens the ineffable experience that *La Eterna* embodies, which unties social bonds.[50] Had this experience burst into the city, it could have provoked the dispersion of the people. The members of the community of conspirators deterritorialize the city's space, which is configured by the State. They infiltrate this territory to configure a new space in which an alternative community can be created. Nevertheless, at the same time, this space is reterritorialized on a deeper level. The citizens who can perceive the absolute plurality of the radical Other, as they face the ineffable experience that *La Eterna* creates, will be released from power relations. In turn, they will be brought back to themselves, but with a higher and secret unity of the individual subject.

This is the double face of the community of conspirators, which reflect the two sides of *Museo*. On the one hand, there is the rhizomatic novel. *Museo* dislocates the reader's self, and Macedonio's writing deterritorializes language to open a new space for fiction. He connects his writing with political immediacy and creates collective assemblages of enunciation that reveal alternative ways of living together, which work against the forms that the power of the Sate imposes on modern societies. On the other hand, there is a root book. There is a deep structure that exists behind the dimensions that the novel creates. The rhizome intersects with this root and

[50] *El Presidente* bears witness to the dislocation of the city's axis. In the following passage, he still believes that the city can be saved if invested with mystery. Macedonio writes: "[y] el Misterio quedó brindado al revelar el Presidente, concluida la Conquista, el hecho más singular de ciudad alguna, de que fue único testigo sabiente. Pues he aquí que en un día del año 193 , y dentro de un período de mero vivir, de frivolidad, al ocurrir que el cuerpo de Alfonsina Storni tocó las aguas de la muerte la ciudad se desplazó sobre su eje girando su perímetro unos centímetros" (204). Then he will realize that his plan to imbue the city with beauty and mystery had actually failed.

converges with it. The lines of flight diverge and seem to reproduce the rigidified formations it was their function to dismantle.

It is interesting to notice that as we map *Museo* it is possible to verify that there is not a deep structure that supports the novel's dimensions and sequences. When we follow the traces that *La Eterna* leaves in the novel we were able to see that there is a deep code and secret unity in Macedonio's notion of the individual, which structures the novel. However, this does not seem to be a question of the different perspectives that we might assume to study the novel, but rather a fundamental characteristic of *Museo*. It has been crucial to map the becoming of Macedonio's writing as a rhizome in order to analyze the new territory that he creates for his artistic assemblage, as well as to understand how the novel's most important mechanisms and narrative devices function. It has been equally relevant to trace how his writing conveys the secret unity that the individual bears for Macedonio in order to understand his political philosophy and theory of the state.

The articulation of both perspectives (map/tracing) allows us to grasp the vision of the alternative community that Macedonio projects. As he says in his dedication, the ethical experience that *La Eterna* provokes does not fuse individual singularities into a plurality. On the contrary, it preserves and defends singularities. This is one root of the book that bifurcates and multiplies alongside the story. While the novel deterritorializes lines of stratification and reveals how power uses fictional narratives to fuse individual singularities into common ideals (the nation, the state, a common identity), it also promotes an ethical experience through which individuals, within the solitude of their existence, can gain access to a higher, secret unity of their own individual subjectivities. Therefore, it seems that the only viable alternative community that the novel projects, one which works against the urban-modern society codified

by the power of the State, is an *anachoretic* community, a community of those who love at a distance, as it is the case with the community of conspirators that finally scatters at the end of the novel.

2

Jorge Luis Borges:

Sects, Secret Societies and Groups of Conspirators

Introduction

Through my analysis of Borges' involvement in closed communities of intellectuals from the 1920s until 1940s, I will demonstrate that from his early literary production there has been a dynamic relationship between his involvement and participation in intellectual elites and the formation of his literary discourse about restricted communities. I will also address how this literary discourse changes as Borges modifies his positions in different intellectual groups. I will illuminate his transition from the avant-garde groups of the 1920s to a selective aristocratic intellectual elite in the 1940s, and how this transition is also reflected in his short stories about secret societies, sects, brotherhoods and conspiratorial groups. I will then demonstrate a previously unnoted but crucial influence, that, by the end of the 1940s, likely fostered and shaped Borges' taste for secret societies, brotherhoods, sects and conspiracies. Finally, I will address Borges' retrospective on his personal experiences as a member of a conspiratorial group that promoted collective political, cultural, and literary projects.

As noted in the previous chapter, Borges was enchanted by Buenos Aires when he came back from Europe. However, he has also expressed that he felt a certain disappointment when he returned to Argentina. He says that he found an insipid territory, without the color of barbarism that he had imagined.[51] In the first section, "The sect of defiance and the knife," I will analyze how Borges, as he conducts a literary and mythical exploration of Buenos Aires, finds in the recent lost past of the city, and in its legends, the same courage of those men that during the

[51] See Borges' prologue for the anthology *Macedonio Fernández*.

nineteenth century had to face the barbarism of a hostile territory. I will analyze his stories about toughs and knife fighters to explain how Borges understands them as a restricted community, a community based on superior values, which has cut its ties with society at large in order to create its own space. I will explain the formation, structure and dynamic of this group in his literature and I will argue that it represents the first trace in his work of restricted communities, a trace which encompasses his own experience as a member of this kind of community.

In the second section, I will particularly trace the exchange of ideas that existed between the closed intellectual elite that gathered around the Argentinean literary journal *Sur* (Borges being a prominent member) and Roger Caillois, a founding member of the *Collège de Sociologie* (1937-1939), a research center in Paris devoted to the study of closed communities. By examining the traces left by this interchange, I will reveal that the transatlantic connection between intellectuals from the group and Caillois was fundamentally based on the configurations and functions that they believed closed intellectual elites should assume. The actual encounter between Caillois and the group of intellectuals around *Sur* in Buenos Aires in 1939 was fostered by the affinities in their thinking about the formation and functioning of restricted communities of intellectuals. I will also illuminate the probable decisive influence that Caillois had in fostering Borges' literary imagination about secret societies, sects and conspiracies.

In the third section, "*Ficciones*, a universe created by secret societies," I will analyze the formation of secret societies in Borges' literature of the 1940s. I will focus my analysis on the formation of two different kinds of secret organization. First I will shed new light on Borges' famous short story "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius" (1940), to map secret societies that become scattered to infiltrate social and political structures. This is one of the most common manifestations of secret societies in Borges literature. It is possible to analyze this phenomenon

in short stories and poems such as “La secta del Fenix,” “Los Conjurados,” and “Los Lamed Walfniks.” In my study of “Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius,” I will especially analyze a secret society that has not been illuminated before. This secret society, which has a decisive role in the plot, redoubles, protects and spreads the secret that is initially implanted in the story by the first secret society that emerges in the text. Then I will follow the formation of another clandestine organization, in “La lotería de Babilonía,” that carries out an operation to gain access to the power of the state. This secret society not only seeks to control the population, but also to use the state’s apparatus as an instrument to ensure the economic profits that moves the organization. The analysis of a secret society that achieves the power of the state will lead to reflection on the possible consequences for this type of organization when it controls the power of the state. Caillois’ research on sects, and Deleuze and Guattari’s study of secret societies as “war machines,” are part of the theoretical edifice on which I build my analysis of the dynamic of secret communities in Borges’ literary texts, and of the actual formation of hermetic communities most specifically within the context of the 1940s.

In the last section, “Alejandro Ferri’ treason,” I will analyze how Borges depicts the relationship between a secret society and a member that betrays the organization. I will first briefly address his short story “Tema del traidor y del héroe” (1944), in which Borges includes the treason of a prominent member of the conspiratorial group as a key element of the plot. Then I will study his longest short story, “El Congreso,” in which there is also a member that betrays his sacred oath with the other members of the secret society in which he participated. I will illuminate strong points of connection between this text and Borges’ personal experience as a member of a conspiratorial group in the 1920s. I will argue that through this text Borges engages in a dialogue with Macedonio’s novel, *Museo de la Novela de la Eterna,* and in a parody of

Macedonio's cultural, literary and political project. I will conclude that the protagonist's betrayal in Borges' story mirrors the author's positioning, heading toward the last stage of his life, regarding the collective utopian projects in which he was involved as a young writer during the 1920s.

I. The sect of defiance and the knife.

¿Dónde estarán? pregunta la elegía
de quienes ya no son, como si hubiera
una región en que el Ayer, pudiera
ser el Hoy, el Aún, y el Todavía.

¿Dónde estarán? (repito) el malevaje
que fundó en polvorientos callejones
de tierra o en perdidas poblaciones
la secta del cuchillo y del coraje?
["Where are they now? elegies ask
About those who *are* no longer, as if there were a
region where Yesterday could be Today, the Still
and Not Yet.
Where (I echo) can that malevolence be,
The malignity founded, in dusty dirt
Lanes or in lost towns,

By the sect of defiance and the knife?][52]

……..

J. L Borges. "El Tango."

The first traces of a hermetic community in Borges' literature can be found in his early literary production, during the 1920s, in the form of the "secta del cuchillo y el coraje" [sect of defiance and the knife], a selective and alternative community formed by toughs and knife fingers. He explores through the figure of these characters a past that Buenos Aires has recently lost. He submerges his literary imagination in a threshold between the civilized urban space of the city and its outside, while he recuperates an old antinomy, civilization and barbarism, which had marked the 19th century intellectual debates about the formation of the state. Borges argues that he has focused on this closed community because he has been influenced by the fact that his forefathers were military men, some of whom had courageously died in combat, a fate he has been denied. Thus he seeks to find that same courage and vitality, but in poor people; "en los compadritos de las orillas, que si tenían una religión era ésa: la de que un hombre no debe ser flojo" (63) [among the compadritos [toughs and knife fighters] from the outskirts of the city, if they were to have a religion, it would be that man should not be lazy].[53]

These *compadritos* are men moved by a selfless courage, and are not like gangsters or common criminals. Borges considers that they form a sect that was founded in superior and sacred values. Certainly, he depicts in his short stories the actions of a tough facing his fate, some times fighting against another knife fighter, but as will be later demonstrated their actions are evaluated according to the principles that have founded the closed community. Borges places

[52] See the translation of this poem in Borges and Kerrigan. *A Personal Anthology*, 158
[53] See Vázquez. *Borges, sus días y su tiempo*.

the values of this sect over the aims of the individual, and those of society at large, and these individual and social aspirations are judged in his stories according the moral values and codes that have founded the cult to which the knife fighter belongs. He believes that in the threshold where the toughs and knife fighters dwell, at the *orillas* [outskirts] of the city, is possible to find a new mythological source for Buenos Aires.

Borges uses the word "sect" to depict a group of men from the outskirts of the city, because he emphasizes their severance from the society at large. As Roger Caillois explains the words society and sect derive from the same root, which is better manifested in the second one and means *to cut*, *to section off*.[54] He argues that there is continuity between the two groups. Those who form a sect establish a homogenous, restricted society, cutting ties from the society at large, but the sect may then develop further and someday absorb the entire society. One gains access to such a closed community by first distancing oneself from the rest of society. This act creates a rupture and, at the same time, seals an alliance with those who have produced the same separation. When the sect splits from its past and from the roots of the old order, the forces that are released in the rupture seal the alliance among the members, all the while opening a new era and a new space in which these forces can unfold. Therefore, a sect does not necessarily imply a restricted society devoted to the worship of a religious cult, but rather refers to a group of people who, considering themselves as part of a chosen minority, cut their ties from the rest of the society and subordinate themselves to a superior ethic.

In 1927 Borges publishes "Leyenda Policial" [Police Legend], one of the first texts in which he includes toughs and knife fighters.[55] The story is about the duel between two knife fighters, one from the south side of the city and the other one from the north side. The

[54] See Caillois. "The Spirit of Sect," 34.
[55] This story was first published in the journal *Martín Fierro*, on February, 1927, and later included in the book *El Idioma de los Argentinos* (1928).

denouement is situated in the Palermo neighborhood of Buenos Aires, at the beginning of the twentieth century, and through this text the writer recuperates lost legends originated in this space of the city. In a recent past, knife fights were a way of defending one's honor and the pride of the neighborhood. Nevertheless, the narrator in the story says that in those years nobody would have thought that this area was in fact a neighborhood. It was *las orillas* (edge, shore, margin, limit), an expression that was not used just to depict the geography of the areas**,** but rather to point out the poor suburban neighborhoods that surrounded the city, the margins that separated the city from the pampas.

In his book *Evaristo Carriego*, Borges's literary imagination explores in depth the Palermo neighborhood, which was one of the outskirts of the city where the released forces of the sect of defiance and the knife were at play, and in which they configured their own space.[56] Borges admits that through Carriego's poetry and chronicles he found a neighborhood that was not directly revealed to him. As he says, he grew up in Palermo, but in a garden "detrás de una verja con lanzas y en una biblioteca de ilimitados libros ingleses" [behind a fence of iron palings, and in a library of endless English books] (9). It was only through Carriego's poetry that Borges perceived the recent past of the neighborhood, which existed beyond that fence. Nevertheless, Borges does not read Carriego's poems as if they were depicting the actual history of the neighborhood. He believes that they are an abstraction from reality, in which he identifies the distinctive characters from the neighborhoods and their language. Carriego's poems are like stories that invent themselves, assembling pieces of different stories and symbols from the real outskirts of the city.

Following Carriego's poems and chronicles, while they are mapping and recuperating the legends and stories of knife fighters that were orally transmitted by the people in the

[56] See Borges, *Evaristo Carriego* (1930).

neighborhoods, Borges creates his short stories about the sect of defiance and courage. He points out that in his conversation Carriego also evoked stories that gave shape to the reality of the margins of the city, and those who were from the center listened to him as if he were telling them fables from a far-away country. But, even though these stories were abstractions from reality, they were not from a foreign country. When Carriego told stories about the toughs in the neighborhood, Borges says, the actual knife fighters would have been able to see themselves in his chronicles. Carriego had known them since he was fourteen years old. He was also a friend of the chief of Palermo, Nicolás Paredes, who actually introduced him to the knife fighters of his district.[57]

In his poems, Carriego establishes a crucial distinction between the modern tough and the old tough, a distinction that Borges also embraces in his short stories about the toughs and the knife fighters. Carriego's poems celebrate the knife fighters' cult of courage, commanding the respect and admiration of the residents of the neighborhood.[58] Nevertheless, Borges clarifies that this does not represent an exaltation of the tough as rogue, but a depiction of an older type of tough. He argues the old tough was "[u]n estoico, en el mejor de los casos; en el peor, un profesional del barullo, un especialista de la intimidación progresiva, un veterano del ganar sin pelear" (66) [at best a stoic, at worst he was an expert in making a big noise, a specialist in stepped-up intimidation, a veteran of winning without ever fighting]. This is the member of the

[57] The charismatic leader in a neighborhood like Paredes was a societal figure who could be recognized in these areas at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries. The politicians used such figures to manipulate elections by force. The implementation of the Sáenz Peña Act in 1912, which required the registration of voters, compulsory voting and the secret ballot, broke up these private militias.

[58] See, for instance, Carriego's poem "El Guapo," included in Misas Herejes (1908): "El barrio le admira. Cultor del coraje,/conquistó, a la larga, renombre de osado;/ se impuso en cien riñas entre el compadraje/ y de las prisiones salió consagrado.//Conoce sus triunfos y ni aun le inquieta/ la gloria de otros, de muchos temida,/ pues todo el Palermo de acción le respeta/ y acata su fama, jamás desmentida.//…// Pronto a la pelea -pasión del cuchillo/ que ilustra las manos por él mutiladas-,/ su pieza, amenaza de algún conventillo,/ es una academia de ágiles visteadas.//" (87).

restricted community that Borges imagines, which radically cuts it ties to stand above the society at large and impose the values that structure his closed community.

In his famous short story "Hombre de la esquina rosada" (1935) ["Streetcorner Man"], Borges includes a character that represents the modern tough, and a clear contrast between this type and the old tough clearly emerges.[59] The story is narrated in the first person by a character who witnesses the events, one who seems to be secondary to the plot but by the end reveals himself as the sly protagonist. The action takes place on the outskirts of Buenos Aires, next to the Maldonado River. In the story, the narrator is heard telling Borges what happened on the night that Francisco Real, who represents the modern tough, went to the neighborhood of Rosendo Juárez, who is one of the toughest fighters and who initially seems to represent the old kind of tough, looking to defy him. Since that night, Juárez never returned to the neighborhood and his fate changed forever.

Real and his gang crash into the *milonga* (dance hall), noisy and arrogant, shattering the tranquility of the neighborhood, looking for Juárez to challenge him to a duel. Surprisingly, Juárez rejects this challenge and leaves the *milonga* without defending the honor of the neighborhood. Real, perplexed by this turn of events, hugs Juárez's woman, "la Lujanera," and starts to dance with her. Then Real and "la Lujanera" go outside together. The narrator says that he was dismayed after he saw the toughest fighter of his neighborhood leaving the place without defending its honor, and he also leaves the *milonga*, filled with shame. Even though, once he is outside, he tries to convince himself that what happened means nothing to him, he cannot get over Juárez's cowardice and the outsider's bravery. He says: "Sentí después que no, que el barrio cuanto más aporriao, más obligación de ser guapo" [Then I thought no, the worse the

[59] In 1933, Borges publishes in *Crítica* "Hombres de las orillas," which was later published under the title "Hombre de la esquina rosada" in *Historia Universal de la Infamia* (1935) [*Historia Universal de la Infamia*].

neighborhood the tougher it had to be] (106). He goes back to the dance hall and he realizes that many of his gang have already left, probably also feeling ashamed. Suddenly, he hears "la Lujanera" crying and begging to be let inside right away. Once she is inside, Real appears after her and falls dead on the floor of the *milonga* with a deep gash in his chest. At the sound of the police approaching, the people who are there drag Real's body to the river and throw it in. The narrator says that then he calmly left the place and went to his home. "Entonces, Borges, volví a sacar el cuchillo corto y filoso […] le pegue otra revisada, y estaba como nuevo, inocente, y no quedaba ni un rastrito de sangre" (107) [Then, Borges, [he says] I put my hand inside my vest […] and took my knife out again. I turned the blade over, slowly. It was as good as new, innocent-looking, and there wasn't the slightest trace of blood on it].

Thirty-five years later, Rosendo Juárez has the opportunity to give his version of what happened that night, when Borges publishes "Historia de Rosendo Juárez" [Rosendo Juárez's history]. In this story, Juárez explains to the narrator why that night, "[s]ucedió entonces lo que nadie quiere entender. En ese botarete provocador me vi como en un espejo y me dio vergüenza. No sentí miedo; acaso de haberlo sentido, salgo a pelear" (192) [then it happened what nobody wants to understand. Facing that smarty provocateur I saw myself as reflected on a mirror and I felt embarrassed. I was not scared; if I had felt that I would have gone out to fight]. Beatriz Sarlo points out, relying on Juárez's words, that "Hombre de la esquina rosada," is a story based on a challenge that was not the result of a previous offense. Juárez refuses the duel, not because he is afraid to fight, but rather because he feels shame when he sees himself reflected in his contender.[60] Courage is devalued in the story, because there is no reason given for the fight and the ritual of the duel is devoid of justification.

[60] See Sarlo. *Borges, Un escritor en las orillas*, 54-55.

Sarlo explains that the duel requires a relationship between equals and hence Juárez's refusal is based on the moral inferiority of his challenger. He rejects the duel because he who provoked it does not respect the duel as an instrument to establish the sacred order which rules the sect of defiance and the knife. Therefore, Sarlo concludes that Real, the tough who crashes into the *milonga*, is a symbol of the modern tough who represents the decadence of the closed community of the knife fighters, since he appeals to the duel without looking for any reparation or pursuing justice.

However, this line of analysis has blurred and overshadowed crucial aspects of "Hombre de la esquina rosada." Considering the duel between equals as the only means of sealing the pact of the community of knife fighters, as the ritual of initiation of its members to gain access to the sect, a crucial thread that constitutes the plot is missing. Focusing the literary analysis on the *compadrito* who is narrating what happened that night, it is possible to perceive that the sect is not degraded in the text. On the contrary, it is reaffirmed through a story that becomes clandestine within the same text. The narrator says that he was ashamed when he saw Juárez leaving his people. The circumstances surrounding his return to the dance hall are obscure, but at the end of the story it is revealed that in the path leading back to the *milonga*, the narrator must have found Real outside. Probably, he treacherously kills him, without engaging in a duel.

The narrator bears the characteristics of the old tough, the *orillero.* He is discrete and taciturn, making the outsider pay with his life for his offense. The fact that Real's death was not in a duel does not make the narrator a modern tough. It is not the duel, as Sarlo believes, that consummates the alliance of the group. The pact is sealed by the knife fighter's act of separating himself from the rest of the society and becoming a member of a restricted community with different values and hierarchies. The actions of the *compadrito* who killed Real are consistent

with the values of his community, which cannot tolerate Juárez's cowardice and the outsider's lack of respect. In this case the foundational act of the community is not materialized in the duel, but in the protagonist's secret revenge. He surreptitiously imposes the values of his community, and its radical severance from the rest of the society does not diminish, but is reinforced. Moreover, the knife fighters' community is not dissolved, but remains in the shadows.

It has already been studied at length how Borges, by illuminating the *orillas* and putting the knife fighters' stories at the center of his literature, carries out an ideological and aesthetic intervention in the cultural milieu of the 1920s to challenge the old generation of writers and cultural institutions.[61] However it has never been perceived before that in his literary production about knife fighters there is a closed community, which in "Hombre de la Esquina Rosada" becomes clandestine and, enshrouded in obscurity, imposes surreptitiously the values of a sect. Through Carriego's poetry and the knife fighters' stories, Borges does not only appropriate the the *criollo* tradition in order to create a new aesthetic, but also starts to imagine the function and dynamic of a secret brotherhood, which from the shadows and the margins of the city still invests Buenos Aires with legends and a mythology. This is a forgotten crucial thread to study the presence of closed communities, which will become more prominent, heading to the 1940s, under the form of the secret society and conspiratorial groups.

It has also never been addressed how Borges' participation and involvement with a closed elite of intellectuals during the 1920s could inform the formation of his literary discourse at about the time of the sect of defiance and courage. As has been argued in the previous chapter,

[61] Sarlo, among others, has studied how Borges' intervention is an ideological maneuver because he is indirectly pointing to the origins of a weak society. In the recent rural past of the 19th century the duel established order in a space without written laws. Through Carriego's poetry and the knife fighters' stories, Borges puts his literature in proximity to this violence, in an intimate relationship with the *criollo* tradition and the *gauchesca* literature. The maneuver is aesthetic, Sarlo says, because by releasing the outskirts from its social stigma, Borges defines an original territory that allows him to distinguish his work from the rest of Argentinean literature. See Sarlo. Ibid, 181-182.

he belonged to a group that embraced the imaginary of the conspiracy as a tactic and strategy with which to assault the cultural milieu, and gathered together around Macedonio as the mythical figure that nourished this plot. The group of young writers believed that they participated in a hermetic community that, withdrawing from society at large, and from the traditional intellectual circles, sealed the secret circle that they formed in order to carry out a clandestine intervention in their milieu, and subvert social and cultural structure. In Borges' early literary production we can already trace a collective practice of an exclusive community that strengthens its own identity by radically cutting itself off form the flows and relation of the social body.

As Borges steps into the 1930s and becomes a more prominent writer in the Argentinean literary scene, he starts to leave behind his fascination for marginal characters. Even though the stories of toughs and knife fighter will be always present in his literary production, he will neglect his engagement with both the avant-garde literary movements of the 1920s and political projects, such as Yrigoyen's presidency, which were more inclined to represent and include the common people. As he becomes a conservative member of another exclusive intellectual elite and is influenced, as it will be further explained in the next section, by new trends of theories and ideas, he elaborates new tropes and techniques to represent closed communities in his literary production.

It is also interesting to notice that Borges' departure from the 1920s also marked a rupture with Macedonio in 1928. The fluent dialogue that Macedonio and Borges shared ceased.[62] Carlo García, as he traces the more evident splitting participations of each of them in different projects to publish literary journals, or in different intellectual events, which

[62] In a letter, dated on July 18, 19228, Macedonio writes to a friend: "Con Borges me comunico poco" [I'm not regularly in touch with Borges] (110). See *Obras Completas*. Vol. 2.

proliferated due to the constant visits of intellectuals from Spain, conjectures that profound differences in their friendship had emerged.[63] Moreover different factions within the avant-garde literary groups sparked a controversy about Borges' originality. While one group pointed out that Borges as Macedonio's disciple only reproduced the literary aesthetic of his mentor, the other faction defended Borges' independence and originality as a writer. This quarrel affected the relationship between them, and in 1929 Borges finally went to visit Macedonio. Nonetheless their relationship would never have the same intimacy that they shared at the beginning of that decade.[64]

II. *Collège de Sociologie* and *Sur*: secret societies and intellectual elites.

In 1931, Victoria Ocampo and Waldo Frank, with the guidance of Ortega y Gasset from Spain, launched the cultural and literary journal *Sur*, one of the most important journals in Latin America during the twentieth century. *Sur* was very different in form, content, and intent from the previous journals founded by the avant-garde groups in the 1920s. It had a cosmopolitan and Latin American perspective, which was not confined to domestic disputes. Ocampo aimed to consolidate a bridge between Latin America and Europe, positioning Buenos Aires as a keystone to sustain a fluent dialogue and cultural channel between the two continents. The journal divulged the Latin American culture for an international audience, promoting the new intellectual and literary voices from the region, while translating into Spanish the work of foreign intellectuals and writers. Ocampo also founded the publishing house *Sur*, which translated and published authors such as Sartre and Faulkner before they even became famous in Europe and

[63] See García. Ibid, 177-179.
[64] See García. Ibid, 181.

the United States. This also served to gain credibility and a large audience, which set the high quality standard that characterized *Sur*'s cultural project.

Borges contributed to the journal from the very beginning. He published articles, translations of poems, and reviews of texts ranging from Chesterton's detective novels to *The Arabian Nights.* As the editorial line shifted heading toward the end of the 1930s, instead of favoring essays about the Argentinean reality and international criticism, focused on promoting his fiction, he moved from the margins of the editorial board's decisions to the center. Ocampo knew, as she says, that Borges' literature "[e]ra tener en mano un as de triunfo, un futuro pasaporte que nos daría acceso a la alta sociedad literaria contemporánea […]" (17) [it was like having in our hand an ace of triumph, a future passport that will give us access to the high society of contemporary literature].[65] She was certainly right, and the key that would open the French audience for the Argentinean writer was Roger Caillois. Already studied has been the deceive role that Caillois had in introducing Borges's work in Europe. Nevertheless I will illuminate for the first time the fundamental role that he likely had in shaping Borges' literary imaginary about secret societies.

It is interesting to consider the close proximity of Caillois to Borges, in the context of the 1940s, when closed communities emerged with full intensity and when their role became more prominent in Borges' literary production. Caillois, one of the founders of the *Collège de Sociologie* (1937-39), traveled to Argentina in June of 1939 for a three-month lecture series at the invitation of Victoria Ocampo. Ocampo and Callois had met in Paris previously when she attended one of his lectures at the *Collège*. At that time they developed a close friendship, and through Ocampo the Argentinean cultural scene was opened up to him. The lecture series in

[65] See Ocampo, "Visión de Jorge Luis Borges." *Cuadernos*.

South America coincided with the declaration of the Second World War in September 1939, and Caillois was forced to remain in Argentina until August 1945 when he returned to Paris.

Caillois might have had strong interests in going to Argentina beyond his personal relationship with Ocampo. Caillois claims that the *Collège* was a research center "devoted to the study of closed groups: societies of men in primitive populations, initiatory communities, sacerdotal brotherhoods, heretical or orgiastic sects, monastic or military orders, terrorist organizations, and secret political associations" (211)[66]. According to the founders of the *Collège* in "Note on the Foundation of a College of Sociology," these studies of primitive societies and specific social structures would lead them "to develop a moral community, different in part from that ordinarily uniting scholars and bound, precisely, to the virulent character of the realm studied and of the laws that little by little are revealed to govern it" (Bataille et al. 5). Though the note implies that this community encouraged open access to all, Caillois conceived it as belonging only to the intellectual elite.

Claudine Frank asserts that Caillois' attraction for secret elites is undeniable (6). He was haunted, as were his colleagues from the *Collège*, by "all manifestations of social existence where the active presence of the sacred is clear" (Bataille et al. 5). He believed that the moral decay of society should be confronted by creating a closed community which could reappropriate the sacred that society had profaned. This collective effort, Caillois claims in "The Winter Wind" (1937), should come from an enclosed community based on "elective affinities," which radically cuts its ties from the rest of society and traditional social structures while dwelling among them. Frank argues that Caillois envisioned "an elective order of elite individuals who might themselves constitute and thereby purvey the sacred order or orthodoxy" (23). It would be a new intellectual elite emerging from the aristocratic strata, founded on a well-defined ethic and

[66] See Caillois. "The Spirit of Sects."

emulating "an active monastic order for the condition of the spirit, paramilitary training for discipline, and, when necessary, the secret society for its methods of existence and action" (38).[67]

By the time Caillois arrived in Argentina in 1939, the literary journal *Sur* was already in its eight year. The group that gathered around Ocampo's journal, John King argues, was "a small group of writers that remained together for several decades, engaged in a collective enterprise" (3). Its members shared an aristocratic view of Argentina and universal literature. It was an elite of intellectuals that functioned as a closed group, in which the inclusion or exclusion of other writers was determined by elective affinities based on personal relationships of family and friendship. However, and perhaps more importantly, the circle was formed around exclusive ethical principles, such as an aristocracy of the spirit and the superiority of literature and art. Despite a refusal to engage in political activity, the circle was clearly against populism and nationalism.

Therefore, it may be possible to argue that the encounter between a founding member of the *Collège* and the literary group formed around *Sur* was fostered by close affinities between the two, and based on the configuration and functions that they believed the intellectual elite should assume. It was the outcome of a mutual attraction. On the one hand, Caillois' intellectual project was to study enclosed communities and be part of a closed elite of intellectuals such as the *Collège*, an elite similar to the group that he found in Argentina. Thus, he might have been compelled to travel there, seeking to bolster an organic solidarity of the intellectual elite across the Atlantic divide. On the other hand, as Frank points out, *Sur* was conceived as a "cosmopolitan journal [which] sought to define Argentine culture within its larger American and European context." With Caillois in Argentina, "Ocampo was undoubtedly hoping to orient this

[67] See Caillois. "The Winter Wind."

intellectual milieu along the lines she had witnessed in Paris" (35).[68] King argues that it was hoped that the presence of such a visitor as Caillois, as well as of other intellectual figures invited by *Sur*, would "develop an international spiritual aristocracy, a community of like minds" (28). That is certainly what happened. An intellectual kinship was forged between Caillois and *Sur*, reflected in financial support granted to Caillois to publish and edit *Les Lettres Françaises,* a journal that also received contributions from exiled French writers during the war. This support was later reciprocated by Caillois who introduced Borges, one of *Sur's* most prominent members, to the French audience, translating and publishing two of his short stories in the journal he edited in October 1944.

Another strong point of convergence between Caillois and *Sur*'s members is reflected in Borges's marked affinity for closed communities as depicted in his earlier works of the mid-1920s, when he was part of a hermetic group of writers himself. And in the 1940s, this affinity for closed groups again became more evident in his writing in the form of secret societies and conspiratorial groups. It is interesting to highlight that the encounter between Caillois and Borges, coincided with the period when secret organizations began to appear prolifically in his literary production. In the May 1939 issue of *Sur*, Caillois published the essay "Sociología del Verdugo" ["The Sociology of the Executioner"]. At the beginning of this text is an extensive footnote in which Caillois explains the foundational program of the *Collège*, emphasizing that one of the school's main goals was to study the presence of brotherhoods and secret societies. In this same issue Borges published "Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote" ["Pierre Menard, Author of

[68] See Caillois, Roger, Claudine Frank, and Camille Naish. *The Edge of Surrealism: A Roger Caillois Reader*.

the Quixote"].[69] Therefore Borges was aware of the *Collège*'s research project before secret societies and conspiracies prolifically emerge in his literary production.

Furthermore it may be even more interesting to consider that Caillois may have told his new friends from South America about the secret society with which he was connected: *Acéphale*. In "Preamble to the Spirit of Sects," Caillois alludes to the existence of this group. He says that there were members of the *Collège* full of fervor that could not readily resign themselves to simply interpreting secret societies, and who "were impatient to act for themselves" (211). As they delved deeper into their research, they were convinced that "will and faith could overcome any obstacle so long as the initial pact of the alliance proved to be truly indissoluble" (211). Caillois says that they went so far as to believe that a human sacrifice could forge such a bond among the members and seal the conspiracy, though as far as he knew, such a sacrifice did not occur. "It was easier to find a volunteer victim [from the group] than a volunteer sacrificer" (211). Frank argues that there is some evidence Caillois was involved in the early stages of the group in 1936, "a few months before it had fully taken shape as a secret society" (29). The recent publication of internal documents proves that the group's decision to go underground was made in February 1937. Caillois says that, even though he collaborated with the journal *Acéphale*, the visible face of the group, he refused to belong to the secret society around it.

Frank claims that Caillois' sense of loyal discretion was so strong that, in France, he did not mention anything about the group until 1964, when he published "Esprit des sects" (7). Nonetheless, he did not display the same reserve in Latin America. In fact, this essay was first published in 1944 by *El Colegio de México*, an institute of higher education directed by Alfonso

[69] Beret Strong precisely points out that the publication of Borges' short story marked the shift in the journal's editorial line, which from now on will be more focused on promoting his literature. See Strong, *The Poetic Avant-Garde: The Groups of Borges, Auden, and Breton*.

Reyes, a prominent Mexican writer, intellectual, and diplomat who had a close relationship with Borges. Reyes also contributed articles to *Sur* and was coopted into being a member of the editorial committee of the journal.[70] Until now there have been no studies that might explain how this essay written in Argentina traveled to Mexico and why it was included in *Jornadas*, a series of publications comprised of essays about contemporary economic, social and political issues in the context of the Second World War. It is possible to conjecture that *Sur* is the missing link that explains the appearance of Caillois's essay in Mexico. This might prove that the Latin American intellectuals knew about the secret society behind the scenes of the *Collège*, and it suggests that there could have been complicity between Reyes and *Sur* to publish the essay.

This triangular connection between Reyes, *Sur*, and Caillois, as will be demonstrated in the next chapter, was fundamentally based on their mutual affinities for closed groups of intellectual elites and their role and positioning in society at large. I will prove that the same dynamic relation that linked the *Collège* to its objects of study (primitive and secret societies), is likewise manifested between Borges' participation in closed circles of intellectuals and the formation of his literary discourse about brotherhoods and secret societies. As has been argued, in his early literature production there was already a strong interest in a community that radically cuts its ties with society at large, a severance that reflects the tactics and strategies that the intellectual elite in which he actively participated employed during the 1920. After he met Caillois, his interests in such restricted communities, as it will be further analyzed in the following sections, were intensified, and secret societies proliferate in his texts, which once again encompasses his actual involvement in a closed intellectual elite gathered around *Sur*.

[70] See King. Ibid, 45.

III. *Ficciones*, a universe created by secret societies.

In the 1940s, Borges' interest in secret societies, sects, brotherhoods, mystic communities, and conspiracies emerges with full intensity in his literary production. Several short stories of this period, included in *Ficciones* (1944), depict and introduce at the center of their plot this sort of restricted community.[71] In his famous short story "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," Borges, the narrator and main character, recounts that one night after having dinner with his friend Bioy Cásares they debated about writing a novel in the first person using a dubious narrator, while an unnerving mirror watched them form the end of the hallway.[72] They thought that there was something uncanny in mirrors. Borges says that then "Bioy Cásares recordó que uno de los heresiarcas de Uqbar había declarado que los espejos y la copula son abominables, porque multiplican el número de los hombres" (14)[Then Bioy Cásares recalled that one of the heresiarchs of Uqbar had stated that mirrors and copulation are abominable, since they both multiply the numbers of man]. Borges asked Bioy about the source of the statement. He replied that he cited it from an article about Uqbar in the *Anglo-American Cyclopedia*.

After they looked in other copies of the encyclopedia they realized that this article about Uqbar, a region of either Iraq or Asia Minor, was only included in Bioy's copy. Borges read the unique article and he found "[u]n solo rasgo memorable: […] que la literatura de Uqbar era de carácter fantástico y que sus epopeyas y sus leyendas no se referían jamás a la realidad, sino a las dos regiones imaginarias de Mlejnas y de Tlön […]" (17) [There was one notable characteristic:

[71] In the edition of Ficciones is included two previous book published by Borges. *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan* (1941) and Artificios (1944).

[72] "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," was first published in *Sur* (Num. 68. May, 1940). Exactly one year after that Caillois published in *Sur* the *Collège*'s research program on primitive and restricted communities. Borges' short story was then published in *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan* (1941) and finally in *Ficciones* (1944).

it remarked that the literature of Uqbar was fantastic in character, and that its epics and legends never referred to reality, but to the two imaginary regions of Mlejnas and Tlön…The bibliography listed four volumes]. Their efforts to find the article in other copies proved fruitless. Thus they started to consider the idea that the work of a secret society may be behind its inclusion.

Two years later, by chance Borges found a book that was connected to the article about Uqbar. He writes about it: "En el amarillo lomo de cuero leí estas curiosas palabras que la falsa carátula repetía: *A First Encyclopedia of Tlön. Vol. XI Hlaer to Jangr* […] En la primera página y en una hoja de papel de seda que cubría una de las láminas en colores había estampado un óvalo azul con esta inscripción: *Orbis Tertius*" (20) [On the yellow leather spine, and again on the title page, I read these words: *A First Encyclopedia of Tlön*…On the first page and on a sheet of silk paper covering one of the colored engravings there was a blue oval stamp with the inscription ORBIS TERTIUS]. The content of the book was a methodical explanation of the whole history of an unknown planet. Borges says that, without a parody or doctrinal content, the information was consistently articulated and the eleventh volume of this encyclopedia about Tlön, one of two imaginary regions that Uqbar's literature, mentioned subsequent and preceding volumes.

Borges explains that a group of writers has convened to decipher the mystery encrypted in the encyclopedia of Tlön. He mentions Néstor Ibarra, Ezequiel Martínez de Estrada, Drieu La Rochelle, and Alfonso Reyes as members of this group. Borges adds that this transoceanic community of intellectuals, which seems to exceed the authors mentioned in the story, has exhausted the possibilities of finding other volumes in libraries of the two Americas and Europe. Who were the people who invented Tlön? The group of intellectuals has concluded that the

invention of this imaginary world was the work of a secret society. They believe that this society would be an elite group capable of dedicating themselves to the invention of a rigorous systematic plan: the creation of a complete cosmos.

It is not clear how the discovery of the strange encyclopedia, which seemed to be reserved for an exclusive elite of intellectuals, has leaked to the attention of the public. Borges just says that he admits understanding the excess that popular magazines have shown in publicizing the zoology and topography of Tlön, but he insists, "sus tigres transparentes y sus torres de sangre no merecen, tal vez, la continua atención de *todos* los hombres. Yo me atrevo a pedir unos minutos para su concepto de universo" (21) [its tigers and its towers of blood scarcely deserve the unwavering attention of *all* men. I should like to take some little time to deal with its conception of the universe]. The community of writers is addressed in the latter sentence when Borges says "*all*" (italics used in the text). I consider that he exclusively refers to the community of intellectuals mentioned above. Therefore, it becomes necessary to consider that there are two groups revolving around the mystery ciphered in Borges' story. One of them is the secret society that placed the article about Uqbar in the encyclopedia. The other one would be the community of writers that gathers together to resolve the mystery. The origins of the article and of the encyclopedia remain a cipher within the story; concentric rings seal it hermetically, and the community of writers seems to be one of these rings.

Deleuze and Guattari, writing about the secret, consider the variable relation that it maintains to both perception and the imperceptible. The secret encloses contents that may be unbearable and that therefore cannot be given a form. Alternately, "the contents themselves have a form, but that form is covered, doubled, or replaced by a simple container […] whose role it is

to suppress" (308).[73] In Borges' story the secret's contents are manifested in the form of an apocryphal article about Uqbar. Then, they overflow and emerge under the forms given by *A First Encyclopedia of Tlön*. At the end of the story, the strange objects that appear give other forms to the contents of the secret. For instance, there is a magnetic compass in a concave metal case, in which "las letras de la esfera correspondían a uno de los alfabetos de Tlön" (36) [the letters on the dial corresponded to those of one of the alphabets of Tlön]. It may be possible to venture infinite reasons to hide the contents of the secret, and to assign it specific forms through which it can be expressed. However, it is not possible to apprehend the secret's content by perception, because that perception is no less secret than the secret. It is irrelevant if the final result of the perception is to divulge the secret. The perception of the secret, from a conceptual point of view, is part of it.

The secret moves in two directions once it is perceived. The first perception, no less secret than the secret and inseparable from it, seeks to be imperceptible, and different figures may revolve around it. The second point that the secret moves toward is a perception, also inseparable from it, which imposes and spreads the secret. Whatever the finalities or results of the perception, Deleuze and Guattari write, "[t]he secret must sneak, insert, or introduce itself into the arena of public forms; it must pressure them and prod known subjects into action" (287). In Borges' story the secret draws these same two trajectories. The first direction in which the secret moves is toward Borges' and Bioy's perception of the mystery. This first perception, later articulated as the perception of the community of writers who gather to resolve the mystery, remains no less secret than the secret. The second direction that the secret in the story moves in

[73] See Deleuze and Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia.* Except as noted all quottions of Deleuze and Guattari are from this book.

is toward the "arena of public forms," where it is inserted and spread. As Borges tells us, the strange discovery of the encyclopedia has been leaked to the attention of the public.

Deleuze and Guattari claim that there are two fundamental laws governing the contents of the secret, both of which are set in motion by the secret society. First, "every secret society has a still more secret hind-society, which either perceives the secret, protects it, or metes out the punishment for its disclosure" (287). Hence, the secret society implicitly bears another secret society that redoubles it. In Borges' story, this hind-society emerges in the form of the community of writers. This community does not unveil the secret, but rather seals it. However, it spreads the secret, presumably divulging the discovery to the public arena. The second law that governs the becoming of the secret states that "every secret society has its own mode of action, which is in turn secret; the secret society may act by influence, creeping, insinuation […]; 'passwords' and secret languages" (288). The secret society is a clandestine organization that never abandons its universal project of infiltrating all of society, subverting its hierarchies and the ways in which the state-form codifies the space. But Deleuze and Guattari argue that this conspiracy of equals, which mandates its members to infiltrate society, also requires the complicity of the entire society.

In his short story, Borges says that the secret continued to spread due to the discovery of new volumes of the encyclopedia. Furthermore, he explains that society was hankering to give way to these discoveries. Borges writes: "Hace diez años bastaba cualquier simetría con apariencia de orden –el materialismo dialéctico, el antisemitismo, el nazismo– para embelesar a los hombres ¿Cómo no someterse a Tlön, a la minuciosa y vasta evidencia de un planeta ordenado?" (39) [Ten years ago any symmetry with a resemblance of order - dialectical materialism, anti-Semitism, Nazism - was sufficient to entrance the minds of men. How could

one do other than submit to Tlön, to the minute and vast evidence of an orderly plant?]. The secret infiltrates all levels of society, but the becoming of the secret moves toward absolute imperceptibility and, released from being perceived, it dwells in a non-localized space. It is the clandestine that no longer needs to be hidden. The contact with Tlön has disintegrated this world. Humanity has become permeable to the secret. Borges predicts that soon the world will be Tlön.

Borges' story puts in play the tactics and strategies of the closed community of writers and intellectuals, in which he participates around the 1940, to position itself in society at large and intervene in its milieu. In the short story, as has been demonstrated, there are two secret societies. On of them formed by an elite of scientists and intellectuals that has created a complete cosmos. The other one is an elite of writers and intellectuals that has spread the secret encrypted in this universe to infiltrate social and political structures. Both organizations represent a moral community that defends the sacred and secret values of a superior order that, considering the historical context depicted in the short story marked by the shadow of totalitarian regimes, had been profaned by society. These groups have also cut their ties with the society at large to carry out their intervention clandestinely, while at the same time its members live among the people.

The closed community of intellectuals around *Sur* was also founded on exclusive ethical principles, such as an aristocracy of the spirit and the superiority of literature and art, which its members considered as a superior order that situated their community above society at large. Facing the imminent collapse of Europe and the thread of fascism, nationalism and communism, which also had a strong and visible support in Argentina, the group of intellectuals believed that they could preserve the values of humanism through their intellectual and artistic productions. Even though they did not engage publicly in political activity, they believed that an elite group

capable of a dedication to safeguarding the highest values of the spirit will be capable of steadily infiltrating society at large with the principles that had founded the organization.

Borges' literary imaginary of secret societies and his actual participation in closed communities of writers propagate a model with which to intervene in the social, cultural, and political milieu. However, Bruno Bosteels draws attention to the idea that this also reflects Borges' strong retreat from any collective political project seeking to intervene in the public arena.[74] Borges' model of intervention ignores political subjects (groups, classes, masses, societies, nations) as valid political bodies in order to give shape to an alternative politics. In spite of his erratic political position, Borges was always consistent in his rejection of a collective political movement that aimed to appropriate the power of the state as a means to achieve emancipation; instead, he always favors the power of the individual.[75] Thus, Borges rejects political representation because it entails a violent reduction of the individual. Secret societies and conspiracies are his model for intervention because only they bring together a chosen minority of equals and do not aim to fuse the singularities of society at large under a common ideal. Borges' model undermines the power of the state, but only a few individuals can participate in the alternative community that carries out these operations.

Nevertheless, Borges' literary imaginary of secret societies and conspiracies does not only function to project a model of intervention, but also to map the mode of intervention that other closed organizations use to gain access to the power of the state and control the population. Borges also depicts the power of secret societies as a potential threat for the individual. In another short story included in *Ficciones*, "La lotería en Babilonia" ["The Lottery in Babylon"] (1944), Borges includes at the center of the story a sort of brotherhood that gains access to the

[74] See Bosteels. "Manual de conjuradores: Jorge Luis Borges o la colectividad imposible."
[75] For a further analysis on Borges' variant political position, see Bosteels. "La Ideologia Borgeana."

power of the state. This closed organization does not only seek to establish a political regime, but also to dominate the people in order to secure economic profits for the corporation.

The protagonist of the story, who recounts the vicissitudes of his life in Babylon, begins the story with the following words: "Como todos los hombres de Babilonia he sido procónsul; como todos, esclavo; también he conocido la omnipotencia, el oprobio, las cárceles" (66) [Like all men in Babylon, I have been a proconsul; like all, a slave. I have also known omnipotence, opprobrium, imprisonment]. He reveals that the vermilion tattoo on his belly, the symbol Beth, on nights when the moon is full, grants him power over men whose mark is Gimmel, but it also subordinates him to those marked Aleph; who on moonless night must obey those marked Gimmel. These ups and downs in a circular social hierarchy were ruled by a power of "una institución que otras repúblicas ignoran o que obra en ellas de un modo imperfecto y secreto: la lotería" (67) [an institution which other republics know nothing about, or which operates in them in an imperfect and secret manner: the lottery]. The Company, as this organization formed by merchants is called, is in charge of the drawings and has achieved tremendous popularity due to its modification of the traditional lottery. The buyers of the numbers run the double risk of either winning the prize or—in the case that their numbers are not chosen—spending days in jail or being subject to physical punishment.

The Company, urged by the majority of their clientele, decides to increase the amount of losing numbers. However, those from the poorer classes are relentless. They demand to participate equally in the lottery and finally succeed in being included. This, the narrator points out, promotes the institution of a new order. The pressure of the masses pushes the Company to assume total power. The protagonist says that the unification of Company and state at some point was completely necessary, given the vastness and complexity of the new operations. The lottery

becomes secret, free, and obligatory. All free men are included in the drawings. However, the secret agents of the Company know that if buyers perceive that absolute happiness, granted as the result of the drawing, is a simple product of chance, this perception would diminish their own value. Thus, in some secret manner they discover the most intimate hopes and terrors of each individual and manipulate the drawings to assign them through the lottery.

Borges story provides a harsh political critique, which not only unveils the secret mechanism that the state uses to control individuals, but also points out how a private company, moved by economic interests, uses the state as an instrument to perpetuate its dominant position. Thus Piglia argues, in *Teoría del Complot*, that this short story is one of Borges' most politically engaged. The story depicts how the public power "organiza una vasta maquinación para determinar la experiencia de vida de los sujetos a través de sorteos periódicos" (22) [organized a vast machination to determine the life experience of the subjects through periodic drawings]. The Company carries out a conspiracy through which it captures the subjects, regulates their private experiences, and determines their reality. But the decisions, rather than relying on an arbitrary resolution of the sovereign, rely on chance. Piglia suggest that the source for Borges' story could be found in a passage in the fifth chapter of *The Republic* by Plato.[76]

Borges' story radicalizes the idea that the state imposes certain decisions and hides its arbitrary origin. Piglia claims that the story depicts "el ejemplo límite del control estatal, el Estado es el gran conspirador que manipula y ordena las relaciones sociales" (26) [the ultimate example of state control, the state is the a great conspirator that manipulates and orders the social

[76] In this chapter, Socrates is heard talking with Glaucon about the sentimental and sexual relationships of the citizens of the polis. In the dialogue, Socrates states that these relationships must be regulated to achieve a more perfect society. In his project, which is based on eugenics, the best men in the polis must exclusively have relationships with the best women. In order to regulate this relationship, he says to Glaucon, "We shall have to invent some ingenious kind of lots which the less worthy may draw on each occasion of our bringing them together, and then they will accuse their own ill-luck and not the rulers" (149).

relationships]. The secret that envelops the Company persists in the story, but it becomes a state secret. The story illuminates the clandestine functioning of politics and of the state, because it sheds light on the state's politics that are linked to the state intelligence, the secret service, and to the distinctive forms of control and capture, which protect the secrecy. However, the consequences for the conspiratorial group that captures the state apparatus are not addressed in Piglia's analysis. Even though he seems to distinguish between the state's secret and the secret that involves the conspiracy hatched by the Company, this distinction, in his consideration of Borges' story, seems to fade away.

Deleuze and Guattari particularly analyze the relationship of a secret society with the power of the state. They claim that "a secret society always acts in society as a war machine" (287). The war machine is determined to destroy the state-form. Nevertheless the war machine does not have anything to do with war, and the destruction of the state is only a supplementary and synthetic objective. The war machine is defined by the particular way that it occupies spaces. It can be a revolutionary or artistic movement taking up space-time and creating new space-times.[77] The war machine is a nomadic invention that cannot be reduced to the state apparatus. It is exterior to sovereignty and prior to law. It is a pure and immeasurable multiplicity, "an irruption of the ephemeral and the power of metamorphosis," which unties social bonds as it betrays the social pact (352). The war machine occupies space and creates new "smooth" spaces without lines to demarcate the battle against the "striated" space that is already codified by the

[77] Deleuze, in a conversation with Tony Negri, says: "There's another direction in *A Thousand Plateaus*, which amounts to considering not just lines of flight rather than con-tradictions, but minorities rather than classes. Then finally, a third direction, which amounts to finding a characterization of "war machines" that's nothing to do with war but to do with a particular way of occupying, taking up, space-time, or inventing new space-times: revolutionary movements (people don't take enough account, for instance, of how the PLO has had to invent a space-time in the Arab world), but artistic movements too, are war-machines in this sense." See Deleuze, *Negotiation*s (p. 177-182).

state apparatus. It emerges in an open space and holds this space, but it is also able to spring up at any point.

When the war machine captures the state and operates through its apparatus, it is not the war machine that has conquered the state, but rather the opposite. The state has triumphed over the war machine and has changed its nature. The destiny of the war machine, then, is to be reduced to a military organ, which will be directed "against the nomad and all state destroyers" (418). I consider that this was a major concern for the exclusive elite intellectuals with whom Borges participated in the 1930s and 1940s. They perceived with enormous distrust the formation of avant-garde political parties, unions of workers or other intellectual elites that could carry out a conspiracy to use the state's apparatus to impose and exert their domination, or even to achieve the power of state through democratic elections manipulating the masses. These concerns provoked the initial fractures in the relationship of the founding members of the *Collège*. While Georges Bataille insisted on the crucial role that secret societies have to preserve and express the sacred values that contemporary societies have profaned, Caillois had started to perceive the dangerous deviations that this kind of experience could follow.

In the essay that Callois wrote while he was in Argentina, "The Spirit of Sects" (1944), he focuses particular attention on the process of a sect, which under certain conditions could take shape of a political party, and finally gain access to the power of the state. He claims that he thinks about sects in the specific historical context of the 1940s. He argues that in this context there are some people who are compelled to nourish the project of founding an alternative order. They are eager to participate in an "organization that would start by uniting a few men who are dissatisfied with the world in which they live and seek to reform it; who conclude a pact of solidarity demanding infinitely more from each other than what they gave to their original milieu

[…]" (208). These people imagine to be part of a community of chosen ones, that one day would increase its scope and power. They believe that "[a]lthough it would remain a minority of the elect, it would ultimately come to control the destinies of the whole country or of the world" (209). This assertion acquires full meaning when Caillois starts to ground the experience of this sort of brotherhood in a specific historical context.

Caillois argues that in Germany there were just young people in gangs, more or less withdrawn from society, looking for a favorable space for some sort of desire for ardor and purity. But, first the war, and then the national humiliation, prepared the scenario for a more radical uprising of these groups. Caillois argues that it is well known that independent commando units continued operating on the German borders after the end of the Great War. They were secret associations, enveloped in an obscure mysticism, that punished purported traitors inside the country. Hitler drew his best forces from their midst. Although he later got rid of them, their somber and deadly mysticism persisted, and it is possible to say that Heinrich Himmler imbued his subordinates in the SS with a similar mystical halo. The consideration of this initial frenzy in the conformation of Hitler's faction, which was followed up by the arising of National Socialism in Germany, becomes the object of study of Caillois' essay. He analyzes the conformation of a sect that, assuming the form of a political party, finally achieves the power of the state.

Caillois explains that a sect is constituted not only as an opposition to an order, but also because its members, perceiving such order as mediocre, seek to establish a superior one. Facing the decomposition of the society at large and of the social bonds that tie it together, the members of a sect intentionally withdraw themselves from the society to found a space in which the brotherhood can seal its pact. If the sect keeps its members together and overcomes the first

stage, in which it can only provoke some agitation, without an important transcendence, it could finally achieve its goal: to overthrow the established order. Nevertheless, Caillois argues that the favorable conditions necessary for the sects' revolution do not frequently occur in history. He argues that a disastrous military campaign, an institutional crisis, or a persistent discontent of the people without remedy is necessary. On the hand, he says, is needed a great weakness and, on the other, a tremendous released force.

As the sect makes its moves to destroy the society, it infiltrates its members into the established institutions and seeks to achieve the complicity and sympathy of powerful economic groups and political parties. Thus, Caillois says, that at this point certain political parties present themselves with singular characteristics. They do not seek to implement partial political reforms, but rather a brutal refoundation of customs and institutions. When they adopt these features they are no longer political parties, but rather sects that have assumed the form of a political party or a political party that has absorbed in its high ranks a sect to violently subvert the established order.

Caillois states that if the sect finally achieves the power of the state, it betrays its original mission, because it identifies itself with the society at large, which the sect atrociously precipitates into war. He asserts that once the sect has accessed the power of the state, if it is not dissolved it imposes its radical severance upon the nation and subjugates its entire population to the discipline of the conspiratorial group. He argues that under such a regime the people are educated to live in a state of servility and the sect, with the power of the state, leads the enormous energy of the people towards a single objective. Caillois asks himself: What could this single finality be to which the excess of energy that does not cease to accumulate is assigned? He says that whatever the answer may be, it seems to be horrifying.

When the war machine takes the destruction of the state as its first objective, it can become a double suicide machine. Its line of flight can turn into a line of death aimed against itself and against the state that has captured it. In *Ficciones*, Borges does not include a sect or secret society that follows this deathly becoming. It is not my intention here to introduce an exhaustive analysis of Borges' short story "Deutsches Requiem" (1946). Nevertheless it may be interesting to consider if in this story, which was later included in the book edition *El Aleph* (1949), through Otto Dietrich zur Linde' accounts about his experience as Nazi soldier and then as a commandant of a Nazi concentration camp, it will be possible to follow how a war machine becomes a suicidal machine. While the narrator is waiting in prison for his turn in the gallows, he explains that he embodies the symbol of the history of Germany and of the future generations to come.

After Otto Dietrich zur Linde briefly addresses his cultural and intellectual formation, he asserts that at some point he had understood that he was facing the opening of a new time, which demanded new men. Although he says that he disliked his comrades in the party, he knew that they were no longer individuals considering the highest end that has gathered them together. He says that he fought in the battlefield where he was wounded and that for this reason he then had to assume the position of sub-director of the concentration camp of Tarnowitz. He explains how he obliterated his own individual identity and soul, while he fused himself with the superior experience that only human blood, violence and death could create. He knows that his time, and the time for his nation, is approaching. Otto Dietrich zur Linde says: "¿Qué importa que Inglaterra sea el martillo y nosotros el yunque? Lo importante es que rija la violencia, no las serviles timideces cristianas. Si la victoria y la injusticia y la felicidad no son para Alemania, que sean para otras naciones. Que el cielo exista, aunque nuestro lugar sea el infierno" (103) [What

does it matter that England is the hammer and we the anvil? What matters is that violence, not servile Christian acts of timidity, now rules. If victory and injustice and happiness do not belong to other nations, let them belong to other nations. Let haven exist, though our place be in hell]. The Nazi war machine became a double suicidal machine. The initial frenzy, that sparked the formation of the first secret commandos that nourish Hitler's aspirations, prevailed. The war machine then assumed the form of a political party and from the power of the state, which it achieved through democratic elections, the war machine finally became completely insane. As the narrator says, it was not longer important who won the war, but only the intensification of the violence and energy that they released.

In *Ficciones*, as has been already argued, there are two main formations of secret societies. In the "The Lottery in Babylon," the Company functions as a secret society that gains access to the power of the state. However it does not function as a war machine. At the beginning of the story, it is a sort of independent agency of the state, but it reproduces the same forms that the state deploys to capture and codify bodies and spaces. The conspiracy is always ruled by the state's logic. In "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," on the other hand, the secret society's formation is akin to the war machine's formation. Borges, alluding to this conspiratorial group, says: "Una dinastía de solitarios ha cambiado la faz del mundo" (40) [A scattered dynasty of solitaries has changed the face of the world]. The members of the war machine are dispersed, but they still participate in a clandestine organization. Its members dwell in non-localized fissures of the society and, as they remain underground to infiltrate enemy territory, they are always ready to emerge and undermine the state's apparatuses.

IV. “El Congreso”: Alejandro Ferri’s treason.

> Mi nombre es Alejandro Ferri. Ecos marciales hay en él, pero ni los metales de la gloria ni la gran sombra del macedonio—la frase es del autor de *Los mármoles*, cuya amistad me honró— se parecen al modesto hombre gris que hilvana estas líneas, en el piso alto de un hotel de la calle Santiago del Estero, en un Sur que ya no es el Sur.
>
> [My name is Alexander Ferri. There are martial echoes in the name, but neither the trumpets of glory nor the great shadow of the Macedonian (the phrase is borrowed from the author of Los mármoles, whose friendship I am honored to claim) accord very well with the gray, modest man who weaves these lines on the top floor of a hotel on Calle Santiago del Estero in a Southside that's no longer the Southside it once was].
>
> Jorge Luis Borges. “El Congreso.”

In “El Congreso” [The Congress] (1971), Borges introduces a secret society, and the treason of one of its members becomes another element of the conspiracy hatched by a clandestine organization. In “Tema del traidor y el héroe” [Theme of the Traitor and the Hero]

(1944), Borges has already portrayed the figure of the traitor at the center of the plot. In this story we are told that the people of Ireland remember Fergus Kilpatrick, who was the captain of a secret group of conspirators, as a martyr and hero that led them to achieve the nation's freedom. Nevertheless, Ryan, who is the narrator of the story and great-grandson of Kilpatrick, unveils that after several failed attempts to initiate the rebellion of the Irish people against their English enemies, the group of conspirators finally discovered that their captain was the traitor that had prevented the success of these uprisings. Thus they sentenced him to die. The narrator says that as he discovers the truth behind the figure of his great-grandfather, he perceives events that happened in different regions and ages cyclically recurred in the story that he illuminates.

James Nolan, who is the member of the group assigned to conduct the investigation to find out who was the traitor, sketches a plan to preserve the hero's reputation—if the true face of Kilpatrick is reveled it will be a lethal blow to the Irish people's morale—and provoke the revolution. Kilpatrick, the hero and traitor, agrees to participate in Nolan's plan. One night he goes to the theater knowing that somebody will execute his sentence. The British police never find who did it. They only find a sealed letter that supposedly warned him about an imminent plot to kill him. The people of Ireland think that the police might have even been involved in the assassination of their hero and they rebel against the English invaders. Finally, Ryan decides to silence his discovery and writes a book about the heroic life of Kilpatrick. Borges writes: "también eso, tal vez, estaba previsto" [perhaps this has been also foreseen] (152).

In "El Congreso," the betrayal of Alejando Ferri, the protagonist and narrator of the story has a different nature and accomplishes a different mission, which does not have anything to do with an emancipatory project. He argues that his treason is a confession that represents a perjury against the oath sealed by the members of the Congress, but that his betrayal also forms part of

the Congress. Peter Standish points out that Borges creates in his story a "web of cross-references" that expands and encompasses several literary topics included in his previous work (358).[78] Standish's approach conflates the figure of the narrator and the author mimicking the narrative device that Borges uses to open his text. At the begining of the story, Ferri depicts his peaceful life as an old single man who is still teaching English to a few students. He says that when he was younger he was captivated by "los atardeceres, los arrabales y la desdicha" [sunsets, slums, and misfortune] (35-36). He adds that he has become an uncommited member of the conservative political party and a chess club, and that he has written the text "*Breve examen del idioma analítico de John Wilkins*" [*A Brief Examination of the Analytical Language of John Wilkins*] (36). All of these personal characteristics resemble those of the author.[79]

Furthermore, the ironic association between Borges-Ferri is sealed when the narrator says that the new director of the National Library is a scholar recognized for his study of ancient languages and for a demagogic exaltation of an imaginary Buenos Aires of knife fighters. He claims that he has never wanted to meet him and that only once he had to step up against a knife fighter, since he arrived to the city in 1899. Needless to say that Borges was a director of the National Library. He was a devoted scholar of ancient languages and, as a young writer he was fascinated with the stories of knife fighters. Furthermore, he was born in 1899. Standish, relying on this playful association of the narrator and the author, analyzes the jokes, caricatures and parodies that Borges displays in the story and argues that, even though it will impossible to

[78] See Standish, "'El Congreso' in the Works of J. L. Borges."
[79] It should be clarified that there are slight differences between the personal characteristics Ferri enumerates to depict himself and Borges' personal characteristic. It is true that at the time of publishing "El Congreso," he was single, but he had divorced. Borges mastered the English language and he taught English literature at the university, but he did not teach language classes. Also he was no longer a member of the conservative party and, even though he had always demonstrated an interest in chess, he had never been a member of a chess club. The essay's title that Ferri says he has written is similar to the essay that Borges wrote, but it is not exactly the same (see Borges. "El Idioma Análitoc de John Wilkns").

reduce the complexity of the text to fixed categories, one of the main cores of "El Congreso" is the resurrection of borgesian characters and themes from his early literary production.

My approach to "El Congreso" also analyzes resonances from the past in this text, but these resurrections differ from those that Standish has pointed out. Although "El Congreso" is not a novel, I will analyze it bearing in mind the princples that Borges provides for a novel.[80] In 1932, Borges writes: "una novela […] debe ser un juego preciso de vigilancias, ecos y afinidades" [a novel […] should be a precise game of vigilance, echoes and affinities] (124).[81] I believe that in "El Congreso" there are strong echoes not only of Borges' early literary production, but also of his involvement and participation with Macedonio's conspiratorial group and cultural project, which advocated for the performativity of literature to carry out a collective intervention in the society at large. I believe that "El Congreso" represents Borges' deliberate attempt to mock and betray the affinities that he had whit the group of friends that once imagined a conspiracy. Borges ultimately forecloses the collective utopian emancipatory project. I will focus my analysis on key literary elements of "El Congreso," which I believe are linked to *Museo de la Novela de la Eterna,* and with the conspiracy that the hermetic community of writers hatched in the 1920s.

Ferri tells us that he has decided to betray the secret oath, to never reveal the event of the Congress, when he is informed about the recent death of the last member except himself, which makes him the solitary guardian of the collective experience in which they participated. He explains that he became a member of "el Congreso del Mundo" [the Congress of the World] through his friend José Fernández Irala, who was the poet that wrote *Los mármoles* (38). Ferri

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[80] Daniel Nahson suggests this approach in his study of "El Congreso" (see Nahson. *La Crítica del Mito: Borges y la Literatura como sueño de Vida*, 268). "El Congreso" is Borges' longest short story, it was first published in 1971, as a fifty-page volume, and then reappears as a twenty-pages text in *El Libro de Arena* (1975).

[81] See Borges. "El arte narrativo y la magia."

met him soon after he arrived to Buenos Aires coming from his hometown in the Santa Fe province. Both of them worked in the newspaper *Ultima Hora*. Ferri had already heard dissimilar voices talking about the existence of the Congress, some of them with sarcasm and irony, and others with absolute reserve and gravity, before he is formally invited to join to the organization. After some weeks working together at the newspaper, Irala invited him to participate in the secret sessions that took place every Saturday at a bar. The President of the Congress, Alejandro Glencoe, had already authorized Ferri's incorporation. It is interesting to remember that the conspiratorial meetings that Macedonio organized with his group of friends also took place every Saturday, during the early 1920s.

Ferri says that once that he arrived at the bar it struck him to see a woman among the otherwise all male participants. He depicts the people attending the meeting. He particularly mentions one man on the left of the President and other one on his right. He also recalls the presence of Marcelo del Mazo, "hombre de suma cortesía y de fino diálogo" [a man of exquisite manners and cultured conversation] (40). Borges has already written about the poet Marcelo del Mazo in "La lírica argentina contempóranea," in "La pampa y el suburbio son dioes," and in *Evaristo Carriego*.[82] Nevertheless it may be perhaps more interesting to consider that Marcelo del Mazo was Macedonio's cousin, and as it has been pointed out in the previous chapter, it is documented that Macedonio told his cousin about his plan to carry out a conspiracy to intervene in the presidential elections of 1922, and that Borges was involved and willing to participate.

Ferri tells us that he perceived that the group had its own dialect and rituals, but that it took him one or two months until he understood the dynamic and functioning of the Congress. On the left of the president would always sit a man named Twirl, who exerted a strong influence

[82] See Borges. *Textos Recobrados*, 133-135. *El tamaño de mi esperanza*, 24. *El idioma de los Argetinos*, 104-105

on the President's decisions. On his right, Fermín Eguren, who will help in the President's bankruptcy. The narrator discloses that the President, Alejanrdo Glencoe, was a landowner from Uruguay who had aspired to become a congressman of his country. However, the political honchos have denied him access to Uruguay's Congress. Moved by his resentment he conceived the foundation of another Congress, which will have an expanded scope. He promoted the project to "organizar un Congreso del Mundo que representaría a todos los hombres de todas las naciones" [organize a Congress of the World that represents all men from all nations] (43). This project was inspired by Anacharsis Cloots's life, who was a revolutionary fanatic that particiapted in the jacobin club "Société des Amis de la Constitution," and who was honored with the title "Orateur du Genre Humain," after his speech before the French National Constituent Assembly. The jacobin clubs proliferated in the French revolotionary process, forming conspiratorial secret societies which were imbued with a quasi-religous enthusiasm.[83]

Twirl, who was the closest collaborator of the President, pointed out that this project faced an intrisic obstacle, since it was impossible to create an assembly that represents all men. In this sense, Ferri says: "era como fijar el número exacto de los arquetipos platónicos, enigma que ha atareado durante siglos la perplejidad de los pensadores" [was akin to fixing the exact number of Platonic archetypes, an enigma that has engaged the perplexity of philosophers for centuries] (43).[84] It is possible to perceive that the President's project, which he conceives as a reaction to the farce that the actual Congress represented, echoes, as a negative reflection, the *martinfierristas*' attempt to intervene in the real world by engaging in a parody of the democratic political regime. Facing the mere illusion of consensus and political participation that liberalism

[83] See Standish. Ibid, 349

[84] For an interesting analysis on the problem of representation and reduction of multiplicity to a sign in Borges' literature and system of thought, see Bosteels. "Beggars banquet: for a critique of the political economy of the sign in Borges."

promotes, the group imagined a conspiracy to unveil the mechanism of power that the political system uses to manipulate the masses and make them believe that they are legitimately represented. They promoted Macedonio's candidacy for the presidential elections, spreading the rumor and writing collectively a novel that projected an alternative utopian emancipated community.

What makes political representation possible is that it must preserve the plurality of the represented elements. However, this implies a contradiction to the inherent characteristic of representation, which reduces plurality in order to make representation possible. Therefore, it is necessary to individualize a third imaginary element that transcends the relation between a representative and his constituency. This third element is the idea that positively defines the relationship by the transcendental effect of platonic idealism. The functional nature of this third element determines its connection to political decision-making and seals the representation. This is the paradox that Twirl pointed out. Nevertheless Macedonio and his group aimed to demonstrate that through literature it was possible to imagine a community that preserves multiplicity as un-representable, since the fictional story undermines the idea that makes political representation possible. Instead of a third element, capable of fixing the relation between representative and constituency, they projected an imaginary floating literary sign, which does not reduce plurality, but rather liberates singularities from reduction and domination. The Congress' failure to accomplish the President's project to create the assembly that represents all men reflects Borges' rejection of any line of rupture or utopian alternative that could overcome the conflict that supposes the representation of politics.

Another strong resonance between "El Congreso" and *Museo de la Novela de la Eterna* emerges, as Ferri says that the President invites him and Fernández Irala to spend some days in

his country house, “La Caledonia,” where workers were already building the setting that will lodge the members of the world-wide Congress. Nevertheless, in contrast with *el Presidente*’s country house, “La Novela,” in Macedonio’s novel, which was a cozy and warm space in which all the story’s characters shared their common friendship and would like to stay forever, the country house in Borges’ text is a rough and cold place that made Ferri wanted to return to Buenos Aires as soon as possible.

After Ferri and Fernández Irala came back to the city, they resumed the Saturday meettings. In one of them, Twirl proposed that the Congress’ library should not only have some references books, but intead it should have all the classic books from all nations and languages. It is interesting to consider that even though Twirl had pointed out the contradiction involved in the idea of representing all men of the world, he did not have any problem believing that it was possible to collect all the books that existed in the world. In another meeting it was discussed which language will be used in the Congress. It was then decided to send Ferri to England and Eguren to Paris to conduct research about which language would be the more convenient for the Congress. Both of them prolonged their stay in Europe, the former because he fell in love with a woman, Beatriz, the latter because he decided to dissipate the President’s fortune enjoying Paris.

When Ferri finally came back to Buenos Aires, after Beatriz refused to follow him and become a member of the Congress, while Eguren stayed in Paris ignoring the orders of the President to come back immediately, he went to Don Alejandro’s house in the city and there he found a completely different scenario. The projects that the Congress had tried to carry out had ruined the President and he was forced to sell his land in Uruguay. Finally, the President ordered the last ritual: they stacked all the books of the collection in the inner yard of the house and they set them on fire. As he is contemplating the fire, Ferri says that they had the revelation that “El

Congreso del Mundo" had always existed and would always exist, and that it did not need a group of charlatans talking in a lost country house (60). After the flames were extinguished, they took a carriage. Don Alejandro told the coachmen to take them wherever he wanted around the city. Ferri says about that: "[i]mporta haber sentido que nuestro plan, del cual más de una vez nos burlamos, existía realmente y secretamente y era el unico y nosotros […] Cuando juramos no decir nada a nadie ya era la mañana del sábado" [what matters is having felt that that institution of ours, which more than once we had made jets about, truly and secretly existed, and that it was the universe and ourselves […] By the time that we had sworn we would tell none of this to anyone, it was Saturday morning] (62-63). This was the last night that the members of the Congress shared. Ferri only met with Irala again, but they never mentioned what happened.

The end of Borges' story evokes the final order that el *Presidente* gave to his friends in *Museo de la Novela de la Eterna*, when he asks them to dissolve the community and scatter. I consider that Borges aims to create a playful story that not only mocks many elements of his previous literary production, but also the conspiracy and literary project that he conceived with a group of friends in the 1920s. I also consider that Borges believes that he has undertaken the task of continuing to write the unfinished novel that Macedonio left for posterity. As he says in "Tema del traidor y el héroe," treason cyclically recurs in history and through this twist, which functions to distance himself from his immature political inclinations and aesthetic taste, he still believes that he gives continuity to the collective project of the 1920s, which Macedonio certainly intertwines in his novel.

In a final prologue of *Museo*, "Al que quiera escribir esta novela," [To whoever wants to write this novel] Macedonio asserts that he leaves his book open and "deja autorizado a todo escritor futuro de buen gusto e impulso y circunstancias que favorezcan un intenso trabajo, para

corregirlo lo más acertadamente que pueda y editarlo libremente, con o sin mención de mi obra y nombre" [authorizes any future writer who is so inclined and who enjoys circumstances favorable to intense labor to liberally edit and correct it, with or without mention of the book, or his name"] (253; Schwartz 237). Borges considers that he assumes this mission of writing a story that articulates essential features of *Museo* and the collective project in which he participated in a playful way, and which corresponds with the sense of humor that characterized Macedonio. Nevertheless I consider that he obliterates an essential feature of these literary and cultural projects. As Alejandro Ferri says, while he contemplates the fire devouring the library's books: "Hay un misterioso placer en la destrucción" (59) [There is a mystery in destruction]. *Museo* seeks to create its author, characters and readers through collective assemblages of enunciation. There is not a singular entity in the book that enounces the statements that create these assemblages. In Borges's text assemblages are systemically dismantled. All statements refer back to a subject or to its double (Borges-Ferri), one of which acts as the cause or the subject of enunciation or the subject of the statement. Perhaps, in this aspect of "El Congreso" relies the highest treason to the conspiracy imagined in the 1920s.

3

Alfonso Reyes:

The Mexican Connection

Introduction

Alfonso Reyes envisions a cultural re-foundation of Latin America that must be led by the Latin American intelligentsia. He attempts to gather together a selective group of intellectuals who are to carry out this operation, which would create a utopian vision for the continent's future. This organization has a visible facet. Its members intervene in the public domain by participating in educational institutions, by occupying positions in the State apparatus, and by receiving financial support from the State or other public and private organizations. They may have positions in a diplomatic body, in an educational ministry, or as cultural secretaries. They could publish literary journals or individually produce intellectual work. Nevertheless, beyond the exoteric facets of the closed elite of intellectuals that Reyes seeks to organize, there are hidden aspects of this community that remain in the shadows. Crucial features of its structure and functioning are secret and cannot be disclosed in the public arena.

The closed intellectual elite that Reyes' cultural project invokes needs to provoke a radical separation from society and the intellectual community at large in order to claim the intellectual authority of having mastered a higher form of knowledge. While the members of this community dwell in society and perform public functions, they also have to distance themselves from both the common people and from peers who do not share the interests of the organization.

They believe that because they stand above the rest of society, they have exclusive access to certain sources of knowledge, which invests them with the authority to define the values that must rule collective life. Within the organization an obscure hierarchical structure is configured to control the dissemination of discourse about what these values are and about the ideal order for society. The closed intellectual elite also functions as a center of power that regulates a system of inclusion and exclusion that in turn decides who deserves to be promoted inside of the organization and initiated into the secret knowledge that it holds—as well as who must be excluded.

Reyes' cultural project for the formation of a closed intellectual elite had a deep impact on the Mexican cultural milieu, providing the model and structure for the following generations of restricted communities of intellectuals, and laying the ground for their relationship with the power of the State. This project should be considered a symptom of Reyes' time, as well as a response to his context, particularly to the national and international tumultuous events of the 1940s. On a national scale, Gareth Williams points out that when Reyes returned to Mexico in 1939 he found that the selective affinities among intellectuals, on which his cultural project relied, had been severed during the post-revolutionary period.[85] Reyes' aim was to restore a cultural politic based on amity and to link the closed circle of intellectuals with the political decision-making process by claiming the role of the master for intellectuals, who then must guide the collective life. Facing the decline of their influence in politics within the new order that

[85] The deepening of the agrarian reforms that President Lázaro Cárdenas enacted between 1935 and 1936 strengthened the pact between the people and state without the mediation of intellectuals. The nationalization of foreign-owned oil resources in March 1938 and the handing over of the railroad system to the workers in that same year, among other reforms, reactivated the people's utopian vision forged during the revolution. This vision imposed a social order in which the role of intellectuals was relegated to the margins. See Williams, "Humanism begets good order: Alfonso Reyes and Police Thought (September- December 1939)," 24.

was configured in the post-revolutionary years, and also facing a moment of extraordinary *nomic* danger, both in the national context and on the stage of international affairs, Reyes sought to reposition the role of the intellectual in society.

In the global context, Reyes bears witness during his time in Europe to the different social and political processes that converged in World War I, in the Bolshevist Revolution, and in the uprising of nationalist and fascist political regimes. Heading into the 1940s, he cunningly senses the imminent collapse of Europe. His intellectual production does not cease to map, interpret, and rethink the consequences of these events while integrating the question of the relationship between Latin America and Europe into the larger context of a profound crisis in humanistic culture. Thus, he urges Latin American intellectuals to produce a safe shelter in which to preserve civilization. He believes that they must face the European crisis, which could drag down Europe's cultural, ethical, and moral values, and he encourages the cosmopolitan and pacifist nature that characterizes them.

In these volatile social and political scenarios, Reyes' attempt to gather a closed elite of intellectuals, which will keep secret crucial aspects of its structure and functioning, consists in seizing narratives about the ideal order for the continent and controlling their circulation, while claiming for the members of the organization the authority to define the ideal order for Latin America. The closed intellectual elite that Reyes attempts to organize must communicate with a mystical force that the continent still emanates, which envelopes the closed community in an obscure halo. He encourages the formation of a Latin American intellectual elite that must enact a new experience of enunciation in its intellectual production. It must create new narratives that appropriate in a subversive manner its European influences. The Latin American intellectuals also must articulate in their narratives both the mysticism that the continent conveys and their

autochthonous knowledge of the region in order to understand the Latin American being. He believes that this intimate communication between mysticism and secular and rational knowledge can nourish a new utopian vision of the continent that will guide men of action to create the order that the closed intellectual elite defines.

In his narrative, Reyes introduces through literature the mystical force that he perceives in the continent. There are poetic words and literary texts that in their hidden meanings convey a mysticism that fosters the utopian vision that he projects for Latin America. This mystical force configures in his system of thought an esoteric dimension that resonates within the structure of the closed intellectual elite that he seeks to gather. The hierarchical structure of this organization establishes an esoteric relationship with knowledge that affects its structure and functioning. It configures a regime of power and knowledge that not only aims to control the cultural milieu, through a system of inclusions and exclusions, but that also has political implications because it imposes a cultural hegemony that functions to support and defend liberal states against the uprising of the masses, whether this uprising assumes the form of socialism, nationalism, or fascism.

In this manner, the model that Reyes conceives for this restricted community of intellectuals gives continuity to a history of secret societies in Mexico, which mirrors the historical process that led the country to independence in 1810.[86] Jean-Pierre Bastian points out that, during the nineteenth century, Masonic lodges played a crucial role in creating new political associations that propitiated "[…] el desplazamiento de lo político, desde los actores colectivos

[86] I would like to acknowledge my debt to Beatriz Urías Horcasitas' book, *Historias Secretas del Racismo en México (1920-1950)*. Her research on Masonic lodges in the modern history of Mexico, specifically on how Masons carried out the project of anthropological revolution after 1910, has provided me with relevant bibliographic references through which to understand the prominent role that secret organizations played in the country.

de la sociedad corporativista hacia el individuo-ciudadano de la modernidad liberal" (415) [the displacement of the political from collective actors in a corporatist society toward the individual-citizen of liberal modernity]. These groups, which were composed of Masons, Protestants, spiritualists, and radical liberals, formed an anti-Catholic front that exerted a strong influence over the modernization and secularization processes of Mexican society.[87]

Porfirio Díaz' regime (1876-1910) did not diminish the prominent role that Masonic lodges played, but these lodges were more efficiently controlled by Díaz' lodge, the *Gran Dieta Simbólica de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos*. The revolutionary process that began in the 1910s undermined and divided these organizations, since their leaders were also enmeshed in the different factions struggling for power. Porfirio Díaz, Francisco I. Madero, Bernardo Reyes (Alfonso Reyes' father), and Victoriano Huerta were Masons. Notwithstanding, in the post-revolutionary period, the Masonic organization kept extending its influence through prominent politicians, among them Venustino Carranza, Plutarco Elías Calles, Emilio Portes Gil, Pascual Ortiz Rubio, and Lázaro Cárdenas.[88] This network also permeated an ample segments of the middle-class formed by intellectuals and artists who participated in the Masonic organization and in the Theosophical society.[89]

There is not enough documentation to prove that Alfonso Reyes was a member of a Masonic lodge. Nevertheless, as I will demonstrate, Reyes' model for the formation of a closed

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[87] For another interesting analysis of the crucial roles that Masonic lodges and secret societies had in Mexican independence and during the first years of the First and Second Republic governments, also see Guedea. *En Busca de un Gobierno Alterno: Los Guadalupes de México*.
[88] See Horcasitas. Ibid, 173.
[89] González Mello has documented how, during the 1920s and 1930s, in the Rosacruz brotherhood, *Quetzalcoált*, politicians, intellectuals, and artists converged, among them Ramón P. Denegri, Gilberto Loyo, Luis L León, Jesús Silva Herzog, Eduardo Villaseñor, Manuel Gamio, Eulalia Guzmán, and Diego Rivera. See Mello, "Diego Rivera entre la transparencia y el secreto."

intellectual elite emulates distinctive features of precisely this sort of secret community. At the same time, the closed community of intellectuals that he envisions bears characteristics unprecedented in the formation of such organizations. His connections and fluent dialogues with members of intellectual elites from France, Spain, and Argentina invest his project with an international and cosmopolitan spirit that is enabled by new developments in communications and transportation. Throughout his entire life, as a member of the Mexican diplomatic body and during his stay in Spain, Reyes certainly facilitated the circulation of ideas among intellectual elites. He propagates the work of contemporary writers on both sides of the Atlantic, and promotes the translation of ancient and classic texts. He becomes a sort of cultural agent acting as an interface among exclusive intellectual elites from Europe and Latin America.

Nevertheless it should also be stressed that Reyes' own intellectual production transcends his project for the formation of an exclusive intellectual elite in Mexico and goes beyond his relationship with similar groups in Latin America and Europe. In recent years, the research of scholars such as Robert T. Conn and Ignacio Sánchez Prado has illuminated the crucial role that Reyes occupies in the Latin American history of ideas. These scholars have also shed light on the invaluable source that his intellectual production represents for studying, from an alternative Latin American perspective, aesthetic and literary theory, ancient and classical texts, politics, and history. Reyes' work, which due to the canonization of the author paradoxically has been progressively more excluded from the formation of new generations of scholars, is an exceptional contribution that should be reintroduced into contemporary debates about Latin-Americanism, cultural theory, and literary studies. My intention is to provide an innovative analysis of his narrative and a new study of the strategic positioning that he believes the Latin American intellectual elite should assume.

In the first section, "*El Ateneo*: juventud *arielista*," I will examine the first collective intellectual project in which Reyes actively participated, and from which it is possible to derive the model for the formation of a closed intellectual elite that he then expands upon in his work. In this section, I will stress the strong influence that José Enrique Rodó's work had on members of *El Ateneo*, which provided the guidelines and model for the formation of an avant-garde of intellectuals. I will analyze the main characteristics of this group and in particular I will focus on its relationship with alternative sources of knowledge that they used to challenge traditional institutions during the Porfirian dictatorship. In the second section, "Alfonso Reyes at the center of *porteños*' intelligentsia," I will illuminate the connection that existed between the Mexican writer and the formation and activities of intellectual elites in Argentina. I will draw the trajectory that guided him to becoming an active member of closed intellectual elites in Latin America. I will also provide the cultural context in which my study will be focused. This cultural and historical framework will help to explicate the scope of Reyes' project, which, as it moves into the second half of the 1930s, assumes Pan-American dimensions.

In the third section, "'Visión de Anáhuac (1519)': Re-conquering Latin America," I will analyze Reyes' creative writings. I will demonstrate how in his narrative there is encrypted the order that he attempts to foster in the continent's present and the secret elements of the closed intellectual elite that must generate the cultural hegemony to impose this order. My analyses will focus on the literary elements that Reyes introduces and the narrative strategies that he deploys in his texts in order to restore literature as a medium that can capture the mystical force that he believes Latin America emanates. In the fourth section, "Latin American Intelligentsia," I will examine Reyes' project for the cultural re-foundation of the continent. I will analyze the guidelines that he provides for organizing the Latin American intellectual elite that will carry out

this operation, and I articulate the sociological and political implications of his project. I will introduce the concept of the secret society through the work of Roger Caillois and Marcel Mauss as a theoretical framework to reflect on the structure and functioning of the closed community of intellectuals that Reyes seeks to organize. In the final sections, "*Última Tule*: Mysticism and Secular Knowledge," I will also analyze how he conceives the communication between mysticism and secular knowledge. Following the path between his narrative and his project for the formation of a closed intellectual elite, I will explain my views about the structure that this exclusive organization assumes.

I. *El Ateneo*: juventud *arielista*.

Porfirio Díaz's dictatorship (1876-1911) was not alone as it repressed socio-economic and political antagonisms in Mexico. While the agrarian revolution developed in a larval state waiting to emerge with the pretension of the social elite to overthrow Díaz in 1910, there was also an organic elite of intellectuals that exerted a cultural and ideological hegemony which imposed a strong hierarchy in the cultural milieu to support the regime. These intellectuals inspired by Comte, Spencer and Mill's philosophy, imposed the positivist paradigm as the only intellectual horizon toward which culture and society must develop. This elite formed the bulk of intellectuals who controlled the educational public policies and occupied the highest ranks in educational institutions.

However, a new elite of young intellectuals, who were self-formed in the humanities and with strong influences of European literature and philosophy, dwelled in the fissures of the

intellectual hierarchies and were against the positivists' paradigm. This new elite originated around 1906 in a cultural movement that then led to the foundation of *El Ateneo de la Juventud*, in 1909. This group of young intellectuals had some allies within the regime and they succeeded in propagating their reaction against the traditional institutions, which neglected the relevance of the humanities in higher education. Once the Mexican Revolution deposed the *Porfirian* regime in 1911, the new young intellectual elite finally achieved institutional recognition and occupied more spaces within the state apparatus to support and legitimate its intellectual production.

El Ateneo de la Juventud (1909-1912), founded by Alfonso Reyes, José Vasconcelos, Pedro Henríquez Ureña, and Antonio Caso, among others, adopted important characteristics from the model that José Enrique Rodó provides in *Ariel* for the formation of an avant-garde of intellectuals and for their interventions in society.[90] This young group of intellectuals sought to effectively intervene in its milieu and challenge the traditional educational institutions. Although Reyes does not openly accept it, it will be clearly revealed that the cultural movement pursued institutional recognition and the legitimization of its intervention through the state apparatus. Their goal was to reshape their actual cultural context and set a new hierarchy from which, ultimately, the new intellectual elite would provide the cultural values that should structure the cultural Mexican milieu and guide the collective life of society.

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[90] Alfonso García Morales explains that it was at the "Sociedad de Conferencias," a series of colloquiums organized by the new intellectual elite, that introduced Rodó's work in Mexico in 1907. The young group of intellectuals actually published an edition of *Ariel* in 1908 and Morales argues that it was not just coincidentally that at the same time they were close to Justo Sierra, who tried to renovate from within the regime the educational program. Morales argues that *Ariel* had a strong resonance in the young intellectual elite. He writes that for them *Ariel* was "[…] la expresión americana del renacimiento idealista contemporáneo; la representación y la justificación de la vida intelectual a la que aspiraban" (122). Nevertheless, they also had some reservations about *Ariel*. For instance, Henríquez Ureña points out some flaws in Rodó's interpretation of Greek philosophy and in the author's general opinions. However he also recognizes that *Ariel* is "la más poderosa inspiración de ideal y de esfuerzo dirigida a la juventud de nuestra América" (356-357). For a further analysis of Ureña's approach to Rodó's work read the conference that he delivered to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of Mexican independence, which is included in the book edition *Conferencias del Ateneo de La Juventud*.

Ariel provided a model for the Latin American intellectuals to intervene in their social milieu and this model was later embodied by avant-garde artistic movements, in the first decades of the twentieth century, and by the ideological struggles lead by student movements in the sixties and seventies. Bruno Bosteels writes that this model consists in: "[u]n grupo minoritario, foco o vanguardia de los intelectuales quiere 'hacer pensar' a la muchedumbre a través del arte. Gracias a la imaginación, las ideas entonces pretenden tener el poder de transformar el mundo" (61) [a minority group, a *foco* or avant-garde of intellectuals that aims to make the multitude think through arts. Hence through ideas they aspire to have the power to transform the world]. Rodó's work is centrally focused on how to provoke the transfiguration of abstract ideas into an effective intervention in the material world. However, Bosteels also points out a fundamental contradiction at the center of Rodó's thought. On the one hand, the author seems to perceive the radical actual fragmentation of his social context due to the division of labor, which by the end of the nineteenth century expanded the gap between manual labor and intellectual work. On the other hand, he merely invokes the classic humanistic ideal principle that affirms a higher inner-self to overcome this social fragmentation. Rodó believes that the intellectual, who relies on the inviolable sphere of his inner-self free from material and social constrictions, could bridge the gap provoked by social fragmentation and provide high values to guide the collective life.

Hence, rather than providing an effective model for the formation and intervention of avant-garde groups in society, Rodó fails in this attempt as he neglects the socio-economic conditions that predetermine the social contradictions in which the intellectual pretend to intervene. Nevertheless, despite the fundamental contradiction in Rodó's arguments, his work crucially influences the entire Latin American intellectual milieu and founds a cultural movement. Bosteels considers that Rodó's work has transcended to posterity, because as it faces

the fragmentation of society it embraces a problematic that will also haunt the following generation of Latin American intellectuals: how to bridge the gap between the ideal and the real, between theoretical knowledge and practice, to effectively impact the material world.

In the essay "Rodó" (1917), Alfonso Reyes recognizes the crucial influence that Rodó's texts has on in his own intellectual production, on the work of his contemporary generation of intellectuals, and on their project to form a Latin American intellectual elite. He argues that from his texts they derived the understanding that they needed to foster a solidarity enterprise among the Latin American people and a Pan-American brotherhood. He asserts that in Rodó's work they apprehended the spiritual principles that would guide them and the hierarchy that ought to structure their intellectual project. He writes: "[…] la fraternidad americana no debe ser más que una realidad espiritual, entendida e impulsada de pocos, y comunicada de ahí a las gentes como una descarga de viento: como un *alma*" (134-135) [the American brotherhood must not be more than a spiritual reality, which should be led and understood only by a few, and they should communicate it to the common people as a the wind blows, as if it were a soul]. Reyes believes that a strong hierarchical structure has to be imposed by intellectuals, in order to mold the collective life of society. Furthermore, as he writes: "Rodó trajo una palabra de bravura, un consejo de valentía aplicado a la concepción de la conducta" (135) [Rodó brought a brave word, a courageous advice applied to the behavior conception], he particularly emphasizes that his generation of intellectuals embraced Rodó's search for an effective intervention of intellectuals in their actual world.

Reyes believes that the transmutation of abstract values into the actual world is a quasi-mystical experience, in which intellectuals participate to reaffirm in their work the unity of humanity. In this sense, he alludes to *Diálogo de bronce y mármol*, in wich Rodó expresses his

thoughts about a common human soul. Reyes asks about this work: "¿qué árabe le enseño el secreto de la gracia insinuante? ¿Qué místico de oro le enseño–filósofo práctico– a sorprender las pisadas inefables del Dios entre los trabajos y los días humildes?" (136-137) [Who was the Arab that taught him the secret of insinuating grace? Who was the golden mystic that taught him—practical philosopher—to surprise God's ineffable steps among the works and humble days?]. His generation of intellectuals looks back to Rodó's work in search of the 'sacred structure' that could allow them to provoke the materialization of high spiritual values in the actual world. My contention is that *El Ateneo de la Juventud* embodied this sacred hierarchical structure. The young intellectuals believed that as they transcended social contradictions and material constrictions, and mastered a superior form of knowledge, they were invested with the authority to provide the values to guide the development of the rest of society.

The group professed the same skepticism that Rodó expresses in his work against the Positivist paradigm, as they oppose to this paradigm the sacred values that they derived from their study of humanities. There existed in Mexico at that time a similar disenchantment to the one that since the beginning of the nineteenth century the Enlightenment had provoked in Europe, as it revealed its incompetence to effectively apply abstract ideas to pursue the common good. Nevertheless, in the Mexican cultural context during the *Porfirian* dictatorship, this reaction against positivism transcended the domain of ideas. As has been already mentioned before, positivists in Mexico were the organic intellectuals that supported the ideological structure of the dictatorship.

In "Pasado Inmediato" (1936), Reyes provides a retrospective view of the cultural movement that lead to the foundation of *El Ateneo*. In this essay, he depicts the intellectual process that led the young intellectuals to challenge the traditional institutions and reconfigure

their cultural milieu. He claims that heading to the end of the *Porfiriato* the cultural scenario seemed to be petrified. However, Carlos Monsiváis cleverly asserts that, while Reyes depicts his historical contexts as static, "se reprimen salvajamente las huelgas se encarcela y se asesina a los disidentes, se cierran las publicaciones y se maltratan a sus editores, se producen las campañas de exterminio contra yaquis y mayas" [the strikes are brutally repressed, the dissidents are incarcerated and murdered, publications are closed and the editors persecuted, extermination campaigns take place against Yaquis and Mayas] (*Historia Mínima*, 28). Monsiváis' words illuminate the critical gap that separated the new intellectual elite from the actual tragic events that marked the history of the country. Nevertheless, despite these fundamental contradictions, Reyes only focuses on *El Ateneo*'s plan to assault the cultural institutions, which were ruled by "los científicos" [the scientists] (184). The positivists were the owners of higher educational institutions and, Reyes argues that although they were inspired by Comte and Spencer's philosophy, they feared evolution and transformation. The teaching of humanities was almost excluded from universities and whoever wanted to achieve this formation had to do it on its own, without institutional support, since the positivists were entrenched in the institutions, preserving the interests of their caste.

Reyes states that while the humanities were neglected as valid disciplines, "la juventud perdía el sabor de las tradiciones" [the youth was losing the taste for traditions] (193). There were only a few conservatives, some of them displaced from the official institutions, who communicated to their 'sons,' under severe reserve, "la reseña secreta de la cultura mexicana" [the secret keys of the Mexican culture] (193). Thus, he claims that these sons, one may think here of Reyes himself, who kept in their private spheres books hidden from the positivist-ruling

paradigm, functioned as kind of vessels that recollected and guarded the national cultural treasures.[91]

The new intellectual elite came from an educated middle class that perceived a radical split between theoretical knowledge and practice. These intellectuals attempted to bridge this gap having the conviction to intervene in their social context. However, in Reyes' essay the revolutionary process emerged as a sudden event that irrupted in the history of the country. He asserts that it lacked intellectual guidance and that, in fact, after the deposition of the *Porfirian* regime the released social forces tended to sometimes subjugate intellectual thought. Although he claims that the emancipatory drive that led the young intellectuals to challenge traditional institutions anticipated the revolution, the formation of the new elite and the revolutionary process seemed to be two independent processes. It clearly emerges from his essay that almost all members of the new intellectual elite did not have any engagement with the social struggles.

Reyes states that the cultural movement that converged in the formation of *El Ateneo* started in 1906 with the journal *Savia Moderna*. He argues that only a few months after the publication of the first issues the artistic and cultural scene was renovated.[92] After *Savia Moderna* was closed, the group gathered around the project to organize the *Sociedades de*

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[91] Justo Sierra, Enrique González Martínez and Luis Urbina, were some of the mentors that encouraged the young intellectuals, who had decided to separate themselves from the community of students at large educated under the positivist paradigm. Among these mentors, Reyes specially appreciates the guidance of the Minister of Public Instruction, Justo Sierra. He asserts that Sierra was the only one working for the regime that transcending hierarchies was a friend for the young generation of intellectuals. Sierra blessed and understood the young intellectuals' search for new horizons. But he did not have a main role in the political regime to introduce some refroms, because as an intellectual and poet, other members of the dictatorship working in more executive positions disregarded him. See Reyes, "Justo Sierra y la historia de la patria".

[92] Reyes points out other shared experiences that gathered together the new generation of intellectuals. He cites, for instance, the protest that they organized in 1907 against Manuel Caballero's attempt to republish Gutiérrez Nájera's journal, *Revista Azul*. Reyes claims that Caballero attempted to attack the freedom of poetry that precisely Gutiérrez Nájera defended in his journal. Finally, the young intellectuals succeeded to prevent the 'profanation' of Gutiérrez Nájera's memory.

Conferencias. Reyes writes about these lectures-concerts: "Así fue extendiéndose nuestra acción por los barrios burgueses" [Hence our actions extended through the bourgeoisie neighborhoods], which clearly reveals the social extraction of the intellectual group and for whom the movement was intended (208). In 1909, the conferences were held at the *Conservatorio Nacional*, because Reyes argues it was time to advance towards the state's institutions.[93] By the end of 1909, on the eve of the 100th anniversary of Mexican Independence, the new intellectual elite founded *El Ateneo de la Juventud*. Justo Sierra, an ally of the group working within the regime, created the *Escuela de Altos Estudios,* which was a graduate school that opened new positions to be occupied by the members of the group.

In 1910, when the Revolution began and the *Porfirian* regime started to crumble, Reyes asserts that the cultural campaign advanced over the "fortaleza del positivismo" [the positivists' fort]; paradoxically with the 'slight help' of the anti-intellectualism rampant in the revolutionary process (211). He depicts the atmosphere of their meetings during the turmoil of those days and he writes that the members of the group were proud that the nocturnal meetings were suspicious to the regime. They believed that probably they were under surveillance. Although he admits that only Vasconcelos was really engaged with the conspiracy to assault the political regime, it is interesting to highlight the imaginary of a closed group of middle class intellectuals gathering together in private spheres during the nights, planning the final assault on educational institutions. It was a select minority, a cenacle of intellectuals, that by cutting their ties with the community of intellectuals at large congregated to find their own path to new sources of knowledge that until then were forbidden. Looking for the institutional recognition of these

[93] Antonio Caso, a founder member of the group, delivered a conference on Positivist philosophy at the *Escuela Preparatoria* and this lecture defined the attitude of the new generation against the official doctrines.

sources of knowledge and their intellectual authority, they challenge the traditional institutions and infiltrated them, not only to organize the cultural milieu, but also to effetely intervene in society and ultimately to provide the supreme ethical values that should rule the collective life.

The group later incorporated more members as their interventions became more visible, but Reyes insists that there were only a few of them who formed the avant-garde's highest cadre. After the fall of the *Porfirian* regime, more positions were opened for the members of the group in public institutions. Reyes claims that a secret instinct communicated to them that the time for *El Ateneo* had passed. In 1912, they found the *Universidad Popular* and Reyes writes about it: "escuadra volante que iba a buscar al pueblo en sus talleres y en sus centros" [flying cadre that looked for the people at their workshops and centers] (213). It was true that they established a brief communication with the workers, which had burst into the center of the social and political arena, but the gap between the intellectual elite and the people was never bridged. Finally, the Humanities School was created and, in spite of the *coup d'etat* led by Huerta against Madero in 1913, it continued functioning as a free and public university.

In *Ulises Criollo*, Vasconcelos provides an incisive view on the relationship that existed between the members of the group and their search for institutional recognition. He reveals that after the fall of the *Porfiriato* the new intellectual elite was incorporated into Franciso Madero's regime. He writes: "[m]is amigos me nombraron presidente del 'Ateneo de la Juventud', no por 'homenaje', sino en provecho de la institución, cuya 'vida económica precaria yo podía aliviar', asegurándole cierta atención del nuevo gobierno e incorporando a casi todos los ateneístas al medio official [….]" [my friends nominated me as the president of the *Ateneo de la Juventud* not because they wanted to pay homage to me, but rather in benefit of the institution, because I was able to mitigate the precarious situation of the institution ensuring certain attention from the new

government and appointing almost all of *ateneístas* in public institutions] (464). The group's search for spaces within the state apparatus was not only the outcome of its necessity to guarantee the material conditions for its subsistence. It was also the materialization of their search for an effective intervention in their milieu.

How was it possible that circa 1910 four or five intellectuals could attempt to reorganize their cultural milieu and relatively succeed, setting an important pillar that sustained the ground for the Mexican cultural scene for the next fifty years and the frame for the relationship between intellectual elites and the state apparatus? Their attempt did not only imply renewed ideas, but also the reconfiguration of an intellectual hierarchy, which was materialized in new educational institutions. What was the bond that tied together the highest cadre of the group to accomplish this task? Carlos Monsiváis would answer these questions, perhaps with a complicit wink, claiming that what the group created was a politics about culture based on friendship.

In the essay, "Las utopías de Alfonso Reyes," Monsiváis asserts that the young Reyes embraced friendship as an intellectual communal project. He argues that Reyes did not accept the meritocratic hierarchy of the *Porfirian* dictatorship, which was also based on loyalty, and he resolutely sought for an intellectual life fully dedicated to literature. Reyes' friend Henríquez Ureña became his mentor and together they went further in their search for the independence of their intellectual activity oppressed by the regime. Following Monsiváis' arguments, *El Ateneo* emerged as an expansion of this relationship to a circle of friends. They were a group of friends coming from the *Porfirian* middle class that due to their intellectual backgrounds were convinced that they belonged to the ruling class, and that they held the authority to claim the freedom of their intellectual life.

Nevertheless, Monsiváis clarifies that *El Ateneo*'s activities did not demolish the dictatorship and for the most conservative wing in the regime, it only represented a further natural development of liberalism and secular ideology.[94] Jorge Cuesta points out that *El Ateno* was a traditional movement intended to restore the past, but with the strange circumstance that it lacked a precedent in tradition, a past to restore. He argues that it could had been a neoclassicist movement if they had had a national classic tradition. It could have supported the monarchy if they would have had a legitimate monarch. Cuesta writes: "[e]l Ateneo de la Juventud se significó [sic] con su actitud aristocrática de desdén por la actualidad; pero su aristocracia es una ética, casi una teología" [the *Ateneo de la Juventud* embodied an aristocratic attitude of disregard of the present, but this aristocratic attitude is an ethic, almost a theology](446). Monsiváis agrees with Cuesta, but he adds that Cuesta overlooks the humanistic principles that the group also defended and their commitment to develop the Western culture, which they elevated as a national interest. He explains that *El Ateneo* attempted to recuperate the past, but it was a precise aesthetic dimension of the past: the dream about forming an intellectual aristocracy. This aristocratic elitism was not a countercultural movement. On the contrary, it was a criticism against traditional institutions that sought to manifest itself through formal channels. However, Monsiváis claims: "[e]s Reyes quien con más ahinco acepta la tesis del escritor como Hombre-Nuevo que acompaña y le da voz (forma) a la Nación Nueva" [is Reyes who eagerly accepts the thesis that postulates the writer as a New-Man that escorts and gives voice (form) the New Nation] (113). Reyes' work is a sort of direct or indirect homage to the Revolution, which he honors by providing a plan for the moral reconstruction of the country. A plan that none of the intellectuals who supported the Revolution had.

[94] See Monsiváis, *Historia Mínima*, 34.

Reyes' cultural project consists of a paternalistic plan to reconfigure a new historical subject grounded on bourgeois and humanist precepts. In this sense, Gareth Williams writes: "[i]n order to do this Reyes insists on the relation between his masters and the power of education, which he always takes in its Latin-Romanic sense: as *ex ducere*; to lead something out of the darkness into the light of day in order to be seized" (36-37). Reyes claims the intellectual authority to master the sources of knowledge, which he derives from the alternative archive that he had created with his friends in the post-positivist scenario, to illuminate the right path for the development of a new subject in society. But as Reyes assumes this position he neglects the actual fundamental historical subject that emerged in the revolution. In his cultural project, this subject becomes a mere object that has to be guided by an intellectual elite. Thus, Williams argues that in Reyes' retrospective view of the cultural process that led to the formation of *El Ateneo* it remains overshadowed "the history of the forcible entry of the masses into the realm of sovereignty[…]" (43). Reyes only focuses on the foundation of a new intellectual elite for which a modern state must guarantee a tutelary position.

Vasconcelos provides more hints to go in depth into those meetings that late at night shielded *El Ateneo* from the social struggles, all the while giving the illusion to the members of the group that they were participating in a conspiracy to assault the traditional institutions. In "El Secreto del Ateneo," he argues that the group was bounded by the shared conviction of its participants to transform their spiritual milieu. He stresses that it was a small group that always stayed together and remained together, which performed the task that defined *El Ateneo*. He reveals that "[…] el secreto de las reuniones aquellas, fue que tuvimos tino para elegir las lecturas" [the secret of those meetings was that we had a good judgment in choosing the reading list](497). This experience of reading texts together was the origin of the force that the group

irradiated to transform its cultural milieu. The selections for the reading list, which mainly included classic texts of literature and philosophy, provoked a radical cut with their predecessors and the community of intellectuals at large, as they created and guarded an alternative archive opposed to the traditional institutions.

Reading together was the experience that bounded the new intellectual elite and it provided the ground for the formation of *El Ateneo*. Nevertheless, it is interesting to consider how Vasconcelos opens his essay: "[E]scribíamos[…]acerca del gusto literario y el modo de educarlo, la manera más efectiva de practicar el arte de la lectura y prometimos dar el secreto del éxito de aquel Ateneo de la Juventud[…]" [We wrote about the literary taste and the ways to educate it, the most effective manner to practice the art of reading and we promised to give the secret of the success of that *Ateneo de la Juventud*] (497). The experience of reading together is an activity that he addresses after he depicts their activity of individually writing. They wrote about literature, about the guidelines to follow in the communication of their knowledge in literature and the most efficient ways of reading. For *El Ateneo*, reading classic books together and sharing the intellectual formation process, created a closed circle that self-legitimated the members' intellectual authority. Therefore the secret and structure of *El Ateneo* does not only emanate from its reading list, but it is also encrypted in how they appropriate in their written works the new sources of knowledge to which they had exclusive access and controlled.

Michel de Certau points out that there is a reading activity that isolates the "proper" in the text and it becomes the "secret order" of the work (171). He claims that this is an operation of encoding texts that consist in combining signifiers to produce a meaning, which is not laying on the surface of the texts or defined by the production of the author. A privileged reader builds a barrier around the text which is then constituted as a sort of island which a common reader

cannot reach. This fiction of the island, in which a mute treasury has been buried, subjugates the relationship between common readers and the text, because their understanding of this text is going to be always impious if they attempt scrutinize the secret encrypted in the text by a privileged reader.

De Certau explains that the operation of encoding texts cannot be based on the activity of a single reader. He states that it is a social institution that over-determines the relationship between readers and the text, which is already inscribed in a relationship of forces (for instance, between the teacher and pupil) that predetermines how these readers place themselves before the text. He writes:

> [t]he use made of the book by privileged readers constitutes it as a secret of which they are the "true" interpreters. It interposes a frontier between the text and its readers that can be crossed only if one has a passport delivered by these official interpreters, who transform their own reading (which is *also* a legitimate one) into an orthodox "literality" that makes other (equally legitimate) readings of either heretical (not "in conformity" with the meaning of the text) or insignificant (to be forgotten) [171].

His contention is that the privileged readers form a social elite which, relying on institutions, produces the 'literal' meaning of the text. The text becomes an exclusive hunting reserve, a cultural weapon, used by this intellectual elite that administrates the system of inclusions and exclusions to gain access to the secrets that they have codified in the texts.

Reyes' intellectual production and his active participation in the formation of an intellectual elite, i.e. the true interpreters of texts, relies on the operation of encoding texts. He is

akin to the reader who seeks to appropriate and administrate the knowledge that certain texts provide. He divulges the 'universal knowledge' in his work, as he introduces the literary and philosophical canon in his production, but he also performs the operation of encoding certain texts and words, especially those that convey a utopian vision for the continent's future and attempt to impose an specific order in its present. The exceptionality of his case stems from the fact that he was also a leading figure in the creation of literary institutions in Mexico designed to educate an elite of readers, which reproduce in their readings and written work the same system of inclusions and exclusions under which they have been formed.

Reyes belongs to a generation that coincides with the process of institutionalization of culture both in Mexico and in Latin America. In this sense, Sánchez Prado points out that the autonomy that the *modernistas* writers achieved by the turn of the century did not have the support of institutions. It was Reyes' generation of intellectuals that took on the actual project of building these institutions. As Sánchez Prado argues, Reyes was not an erudite figure who created an alternative archive in order to withdraw to an ivory tower, but rather that his alternative archive was used to carry out an actual intervention in his cultural milieu and to lay the foundation for new cultural and literary institutions. Nevertheless, Sánchez Prado cunningly draws to our attention the idea that we should not be enthralled by the "trampa instituticional" [institutional trap] (35). The literary experience— a contingent and mobile element in Reyes' narrative that is impossible to fossilize in the form of any institution—should be the locus of a critical understanding of his work.[95] Thus, in the following sections, I will articulate my analysis of Reyes' actual project for the formation of a restricted community of intellectuals through his more creative writing.

[95] See Sánchez Prado, "El Deslinde después de los estudios culturales," (13-38).

II. Alfonso Reyes at the center of *porteños*' intelligentsia.

In 1927 Alfonso Reyes arrived in Buenos Aires as the ambassador of Mexico in Argentina and the cultural milieu was thrilled to receive him. He had left Mexico and begun his journey as a diplomat immediately after the assassination of his father, at the beginning of "La Decena Trágica," in February 9th 1913.[96] After this tragic lost, he decided to rapidly finish his dissertation to complete his law degree and leave the country. Thus he accepted a position as a secretary of the Mexican diplomatic delegation in Paris.[97] However his stay in Paris was abruptly interrupted by the beginning of the First World War and by the fall of General Victoriano Huerta's government in 1914 under the rebellion led by Venustino Carranza, who suppressed the Mexican diplomatic representation abroad. Reyes was forced to move with his family to his brother's house in San Sebastian, Spain.

As his diplomatic career remained on hold, Reyes dedicated himself to work as a journalist and also to develop his literary production. He became close to intellectual circles in

[96] This tragic lost in the writer's life reflected the political and social instability that marked the country during the years following the Mexican Revolution in 1910. Bernardo Reyes, his father, had been imprisoned after a failed rebellion that he led against President Francisco Madero. His comrades then assaulted the jail and released him. Bernardo Reyes thought that he could lead another uprising to assault the National Palace. He died that day in the attempt to take the power of the State. Finally, ten days later, the U.S ambassador in Mexico and General Victoriano Huerta organized a *coup d' etat* against Madero. The new president, General Victoriano Huerta, proposed to Alfonso Reyes that he become his personal secretary, but he declined this designation.

[97] In France Reyes reunited with some of his friends in exile, among them the painters Angel Zárraga and Diego Rivera. He met the French Hispanist Raymond Foulché-Delbose, with whom he later collaborated on an special edition of Góngora's work, and also met the Franco-Latin American poets Jules Supervielle and Carlos Lesca.

Spain and he met the poet and writer 'Azorín'.[98] After he moved to Madrid, he met Juan Ramón Jimenez and his relationship with the most prominent Spanish intellectuals, such as Valle-Inclán, Unamuno, Ortega y Gasset, Menendéz Pidal and 'Azorin', became more intimate. In 1917, he even met Henri Begson, who was passing through Madrid. In the following years he further developed his intellectual career teaching courses at different institutions and delivering lectures. He published several texts, some of his poems were translated and published in France, and he collaborated with newspapers from New York and Mexico. Alicia Reyes points out that through José Vasconcelos' intervention, who was an old friend of Reyes and had been appointed as the dean of the Universidad Autónoma de México, Reyes was reincorporated and promoted into the diplomatic service in 1921.[99] In 1924, he published his celebrated poem *Ifigenia Cruel*, in which he commemorates the death of his father. In 1925, the Mexican government transferred him back to Paris and he took up again a fluent contact with Supervielle. He was also in contact with Paul Valéry, Paul Morand and Valéry Larbaud, among others.

Reyes arrived in Buenos Aires as the ambassador of Mexico in Argentina. A welcome banquet was organized by the literary journal *Nosotros*, which the old generation of intellectuals edited. In this event, he met Victoria Ocampo of whom Reyes would become very fond. The intellectual elite of Buenos Aires was very excited to receive him. He was not only an already respected writer and translator, but furthermore he was in contact with the most influential figures of the Hispanic literary world. He also had already been translated and published in France, the culture lighthouse that illuminated the dreams of many young Latin-American

[98] In this period in Spain Reyes prolifically wrote and published several of his books. While he was in Spain he published several texts, among them: *Cartones de Madrid*; *El suicida*, *Visión de Anáhuac*. He translated Orthodoxy by G. K. Chesterton and editied *Memorias de Fray Servando Teresa de Mier*, *Páginas escogidas de Quevedo* and *Libro de Buen Amor del Arcipreste de Hita*. See Reyes, "Historia documental de mis libros".
[99] See Alicia Reyes, 103.

writers. Hence, the different intellectual factions sought to establish an intellectual kinship with him. Reyes already had established an epistolary relationship with the editorial board of *Proa*, a journal that the young generation of writers edited at that time, and he had also already collaborated with *Nosotros*. Other young groups of intellectuals also tried to reach him.[100]

Reyes was enthusiastically received by both generations of intellectuals: the new and the old generation. Nevertheless, Rose Corral argues that he was always more inclined to be involved with young generations of writers.[101] In Mexico, he collaborated with the young group of intellectuals, *los Contemporáneos*, and while he was in Madrid he was close to the avant-garde group the *Ultraístas*. Thus Corral claims that it was predictable that Reyes chose the partnership of the young generation of writers, and that he promoted their cultural and literary projects. He participated with Macedonio Fernández, who was one of the main figures around which the young generation gathered together, in the publication of the first and only issue of the literary journal *Libra*. He also continued collaborating with other journals (*Nosotros, La Vida Literaria, La Literatura Argentina, Don Segundo Sombra, Valoraciones*), but he was more excited to be involved with the young writers and he dedicated his efforts to support their groups.

In a letter that Reyes wrote to his friend Ortega y Gasset, in January 10th 1930, he expresses his enthusiasm about the encounter with the young generation of writers. He writes: "Un día, sin buscarlo, me vi rodeado y frecuentado por algunos de los jóvenes que considero más escrupulosos y exigentes en materia de letras. […] Usted comparte conmigo ese sentimiento de

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[100] For instance, the group of writers who gathered around the journal *Martin Fierro*, eagerly sought to have Reyes' collaborations. Jorge Luis Borges, at that time an active member of the young generation of writers and who had already met Reyes during his stay in Spain, in an article that he published years later addresses the crucial influence that Reyes' presence in Buenos Aires had in his work. See Borges, "Alfonso Reyes".

[101] See Corral, 185.

verdadera adoración de la juventud. Comprenderá que las visitas a estos muchachos comenzaron a hacerme un bien muy grande" [One day, without even looking for it, I found myself surrounded and frequented by some young writers who I consider more scrupulous and rigorous in the subject of literature […] You share with me that feeling of true esteem for the youth. You will understand that the visits to these folks started to make feel me really good].[102] However, Reyes' engagement with the young groups of writers was not entirely clear and probably, due to his diplomatic position, his collaborations were more behind the scene. Corral asserts that there are two different dimensions in which it is possible to frame his engagement with the young Argentinean writers. In the public sphere, Reyes showed his support for the young intellectuals and their projects. In a more private dimension, he expressed his disagreements and intellectual differences with the young intellectuals.

Reyes progressively became more disappointed with the dynamic of the Argentinean cultural scenario. As he writes in his personal journal, he grew tired of the "politiquilla literaria de los grupos o *patotas*" [politicking of literary groups or gangs] with their surly environment that lacked any sense of cordiality (297). Reyes finally decided to withdraw his support from literary projects. He claimed that various groups of writers betrayed each other constantly and favored gossiping over literature. Furthermore, he profoundly disagreed with the nationalism that local writers brought up in their work, and on how they addressed the question of *americanismo*. The latter issue created a strong point of friction between Reyes and the Argentinean writers.[103]

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[102] Corral quotes and introduces Reyes' letter to Ortega y Gasset, which she examined at the *Capilla Alfonsina* at Mexico City, in her essay "Alfonso Reyes en Libra y Sur" (186). Bárbara Bockus Aponte translates and includes this letter in her book, *Alfonso Reyes and Spain: His Dialogue with Unamuno, Valle-Inclán, Ortega y Gasset, Jiménez, and Gómez De La Serna*.

[103] This had also been a question that divided the Mexican cultural scene. For this reason, Reyes had been the target of harsh criticism in his country, where nationalistic writers accused him of favoring the influence of foreign cultures over the national culture. For a further analysis of Reyes's quarrel with

He only agreed to collaborate on the first issue of *Libra* because he reached an agreement with the young writers about the journal's profile. They agreed on publishing a journal that, as Corral explains, was "menos beligerante que *Martín Fierro*, que dialogara no sólo con la literatura nacional y continental, sino también con la tradición española" [less belligerent than Martin Fierro, that engaged in dialogues not only with national and continental literature, but also with the Spanish tradition] (191).[104]

From 1931, Reyes started to actively participate in the conception of the journal *Sur*, as a member of the international board. But this collaboration was another stage of his involvement with the Argentinean cultural scene. With the leading roles taken by Victoria Ocampo and Waldo Frank, and with the guidance of Ortega y Gasset, *Sur* embraced cosmopolitan principles and a Pan-American cultural project. These were the pillars that also sustained Reyes' intellectual production and thus he was compelled to collaborate in *Sur*'s project. He was in this way able to overcome the previous contradictions with the young generation of writers, which at this stage were no longer the youth avant-garde, and who had decided to leave aside narrow nationalism and expand to a broader cultural interchange beyond national borders. Reyes had already left Argentina in 1930 and had assumed the position of Mexican ambassador in Brazil, replacing the previous ambassador, Ortiz Rubio, who had been elected president in Mexico.

On June 1st 1936, Reyes returned to Argentina, reassuming the position of the Mexican ambassador in the country. He was rapidly caught by the frenetic social and cultural life of the city. That same year the PEN Club Congress took place in Buenos Aires and some of the most

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nationalist writers, see Reyes, Martínez H. Pérez, and Molina. *A Vuelta De Correo: Una Polémica Sobre Literatura Nacional*.

[104] In the short chronicle "Misterio en la Argentina," Reyes provides an interesting aside about his stay in Buenos Aires, regarding the cultural milieu of the city and the fascinating characters that he found in writers such as Macedonio and Borges.

relevant figures of the intellectual world visited the city. Alicia Reyes asserts that during those days there were several meetings at Victoria Ocampo's house and Reyes participated in them with the presence of Borges, Henríquez Ureña, Anderson Imbert, Jules Romains, Henri Michaux, among others.[105] In those meetings Reyes met Reynaldo Orfila Reynal, who was the director of the publishing house Siglo XXI, one of the most important at that time, and who then would became the director of Fondo de Cultura Económica, which became one of the most influential publishing houses on the continent. In spite of this active social life and diplomatic duties, he continued writing and publishing his work. Another main characteristic of this intellectual atmosphere, as will be later addressed, was the intellectuals' strong concerns about the imminent collapse of Europe and especially about the tragic civil war that lanced Spain's heart.

Reyes finally returned to Mexico on January 11th, 1939. He had decided to abandon his diplomatic career and exclusively dedicate himself to his life as an intellectual. Nevertheless, in his personal journal he reveals the sadness that also marked this moment. He missed his writer friends that he had left behind and he felt completely ignored by the local media and intellectuals. He also perceived a lack of an interesting literary and cultural debate. Overcoming the uneasiness of this first stage of his return to Mexico, Reyes collaborated with the project of building "La Casa de España," which he had pictured as a cultural and research institution that would invite and host international intellectuals. However, internal conflicts with other intellectuals participating in the project, who advocated for an organization that would receive Spaniards in exile, set aside Reyes' intentions. The president, Lázaro Cárdenas, intervened and designated him as the director. Reyes got the autonomy that he was seeking for the institution

[105] See Alicia Reyes, 227.

and named it *El Colegio de México*, which became a private higher educational institution without lucrative interests.[106] He remained as the director of *El Colegio* until he died in 1959.

III. "Visión de Anáhuac (1519)": Re-conquering Latin America.

In his early essay "Visión de Anáhuac (1519)" (1915), Reyes starts to explore the narrative experience that he will later propose to the Latin American intelligentsia as a means to create intellectual productions that could carry out a cultural re-foundation of the continent. As Sánchez Prado asserts, Reyes' utopian vision for the continent, which, heading into the 1940s, will become more prominent in his writing, has its foundational moment in this essay.[107] In "Visión de Anáhuac," Reyes begins with a complex maneuver to re-appropriate the concept of utopia for Latin America, which heretofore had been tightly seized by European narratives about the New World. Thus, my approach to the essay transcends its specific historical context and focuses instead on the links with crucial aspects of Reyes' Pan-American collective cultural project of the 1940s.[108] This line of analysis will allow me to illuminate how this project and the

[106] Reyes expresses in this letter the same thoughts that years after he shared with his friend Pedro Henríquez Ureña (1923). "Hoy ya pasamos la primera etapa necesaria y utilisima: la creación de una minoría selecta que necesitaba ejercitarse en las técnicas de Europa; y ahora vamos a la segunda etapa: aplicar a nuestra realidad el resultado del aprendizaje anterior". This is the spirit that characterized Reyes' enterprise advocated to the formation of *El Colegio*. He also expresses in a letter that wrote for Neruda his intention in the foundation of the institution: "…educación de hombres aptos para conducir nuestra sociedad conforme a mejores ideales…" (140-141). Manuel Olguín writes about *El Colegio*: "Tiene así el character de una École de Hautes Études, pero privada y limitada a ciencias humanas, historia, literatura, filología…No es un centro escolar, sino un centro de investigaciones" (228).

[107] See Sánchez Prado, "Alfonso Reyes y el duelo de la Historia," 53.

[108] Magdalena Perkowska-Álvarez points out an intimate connection between "Visión de Anáhuac" and a collective cultural project. Nevertheless, she claims that this essay expresses Reyes' engagement with the concrete historical and political Mexican scenario circa the Mexican Revolution in 1910. Perkowska-Álvarez asserts that Reyes' poetic essay's fragmentary form embodies the spirit of *El Ateneo de la*

experience of enunciation that he encourages for the Latin American intelligentsia are crystallized in his more creative writing.[109]

Reyes opens the first of the four sections that constitute his poetic essay with the following epigraph: "Viajero: has llegado a la región más transparente del aire" ["Traveler, you have come to the most transparent region of the air"] (3; Onís 3).[110] This phrase, which will provide Carlos Fuentes with the title for one of his most famous novels, sets the first coordinates along which he situates his text and determines to whom he addresses his opening words. Reyes speaks to the European explorer at the moment of his arrival in the Aztec empire's capital.[111] His first approach, however, to this moment is through several chronicles of the Indies and European utopian visions once projected onto the new world. He particularly focuses on the Europeans' production of ethnographic narratives about America, and on the utopian visions that they project onto the new world. He also contemplates the first cartographies drawn to establish the different watercourses that the European travelers follow to reach America.[112]

Next, the narration's point of view shifts so that we perceive through the Europeans' eyes their first encounter with the Mexican valley. As if Reyes himself were one of the travelers who

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Juventud, which challenged the Positivists' linear and monolithic perspective on Mexican history. See Perkowska-Álvarez, "La forma y el compromiso en 'Vision de Anáhuac' de Alfonso Reyes," 86.

[109] James W. Robb defines Reyes' essay as an "ensayo poético" ("poetic essay"; 51). Robb argues that the essay is a fusion of historical recreation and interpretation of a historical time. However, he claims that Reyes goes further than the conventional essay. Robb argues that this text reflects a "fusión de erudición y poesía" ("fusion of erudition and poetry"; 51).

[110] Reyes' phrase is addressing Alexander von Humboldt's vision of Mexico, who with Aimé Bonpland, explored Cuba, South America and Mexico from 1799 to 1804. See Barili, 149.

[111] De Báez explains that "Visión de Anáhuac" means: "Junto al agua' (atl 'agua' y na- huac'junto') designa a todo el Valle de México y por extensión simboliza todo el país" (467). I will later argue that the Mexican valley is a symbol not only of Mexico, but also of the Latin American pre-Hispanic past.

[112] Reyes quotes among other references *Cartas de relación* by Hernán Cortés and la *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España* by Bernal Díaz del Castillo. De Báez argues about his introduction of several bibliographic references: "[s]e puede decir que el libro, como objeto, cobra en "Visión de Anáhuac" fuerza liberadora. El narrador nos lleva del epígrafe a la región de Anáhuac viajando en el libro de Giovanni Battista Ramusio *Delle navigationi et viaggi*, de 1554" (473).

reached the valley after crossing the mountains, his view is from an elevation as he depicts the vegetation of Anáhuac. He assumes the first person plural and his words mingle with those written in the European chronicles: "[e]stas plantas protegidas de púas nos anuncian que aquella naturaleza no es, como la del sur o las costas […]" ["these plants, set about with thorns, give evidence that nature here [is not like] that of the south o the coast"] (4; Onís 4). Reyes next describes the lakes in the valley from his mountain perspective, then turns his attention to the history of this region. He asserts that after 400 years men finally managed to drain the water from these lakes.[113] The introduction of this desiccation of the valley emerges in the essay as a metaphor that conveys the image of a continuous process of drying up of the idyllic vision that the region once reflected, which Reyes claims is a prelude to the social drama that will take place there. I believe that he condenses in this landscape both the Latin American pre-Hispanic past and the tragic obliteration thereof. His essay seems to be an attempt to flood with water the lakes that have been dried out and to recreate a pristine utopian vision of the pre-Hispanic past.

In the second section, Reyes depicts Tenochtitlan through several chronicles of the Indies, and his view is not longer situated at a distance, now it is resting on the ground of the valley.[114] As the travelers go deeper into the entrails of the city, he describes the two lakes that they see in the valley, the hills around it, the mountain chain that crosses it, and the metropolis located on an island linked to the firm ground by four bridges. Then, he goes into the city with the European travelers, as if he was one of them, and portrays the buildings, the streets and the

[113] This process of drying out the valley was accomplished between 1449 and 1900 by three different races and three different civilizations. Reyes writes: "[d]e Netzahualcóyotl al segundo Luis de Velasco, y de éste a Porfirio Díaz, parece correr la consigna de secar la tierra. Nuestro siglo nos encontró todavía echando la última palada y abriendo la última zanja" (4).

[114] Reyes quotes Bernal Díaz del Castillo who, in *Historia Verdadera de la Conquista de la Nueva España*, wirtes about his first encounter with new world: "[p]arecía a las cosas de encantamiento que, cuentan en el libro de Amadís […] No sé cómo lo cuente" (260).

water channels that cross them. Finally, the native people of the city emerge and are depicted in their daily life. He writes: "[l]as conversaciones se animan sin gritería: finos oídos tiene la raza, y, a veces, se habla en secreto" ["the conversations grow animated but never noisy. The race has sensitive ears, and, at times, the talk is in whispers"] (6; Onís 10). It is interesting to highlight that he points out that the natives speak secretly around the European travelers. As he guides the reader walking into the city with the conquistadores, he emphasizes a zone of non-understanding for the newcomers. They can understand that they have encountered a new civilization. They comprehend that it is a capital city and that they are bearing witness to its daily dynamic. But there is a zone that the travelers cannot comprehend, which the natives open up by talking secretively around them, that builds up a boundary against their fuller understanding.

Reyes includes more chronicles to depict the different artistic expressions that the Europeans find in the city's market. In the third section of his essay, he points out the major role that nature has in the natives' life and artistic expressions. He notes that the natives use flowers from the gardens to decorate the representations of gods and men. Flowers and plants are also the main motif of their visual art and hieroglyphics, and that they include flowers in their poetry as well. He explains that the historical time immediately before the conquistadores' arrival was a rainy season, which was a relief for the people of the valley after several drought seasons. Thus, the first Europeans' portrayals of the region include plants and flowers, which grew and blossomed before the conquest began.

Reyes writes at length about the plants and flowers symbolically represented in the natives' hieroglyphics, but he particularly focuses his attention on the natives' poetry that includes the valley's nature as its main motif. He bitterly laments that their poetry has been irremediably lost. He argues that, although it is possible to discover some traces of native poetry

that were translated as *romanceados* by Spaniards missionaries who could have not understood the implications of the poetic rituals they translated, that native poetry as a social phenomenon has perished. However, against the grain of his previous argument, Reyes asserts that in spite of the adulterations of the natives' poetry, there are still some traces of how they reflect the valley's nature in their poetry.

Reyes states that originally the poems were written in the *náhoa* language and that the natives sung them in their festivities, learning them by heart to transmit them to the following generations. He points out that the authorship of the few texts that still exist is unknown, neither is it known where they came from nor when exactly they were written. Nevertheless, he argues that in the old *náhuatl* poems that have been translated it is still possible to perceive audacious metaphors and a certain incongruence, which prove a non-European origin. Despite the sedimentation of different layers of foreign words imposed on their lyrics, he believes that it is still possible to recover authentic traces of the poems, as if there were in them certain secrets original encrypted that have not vanished.

In spite of his qualms about the translations of these poems, Reyes analyzes a Spanish translation of a *náhoa* poem, which he admits is not even a direct translation of the original. He argues that the poem's lyric has an allegoric sense and that the poet's inspiration comes from the great natural landscape of the Mexican Valley. He goes further in this line of analysis and asserts that the surrounding world seems to be for the poet akin to a profound garden. He writes that the poem is a "[…] meditación concentrada, melancólica delectación, fantaseo largo y voluptuoso, donde los sabores del sentido se van trasmutando en aspiración ideal[…]" [it is a close-knit meditation, a melancholy delectation, a long, voluptuous play of fancy in which the reactions of the senses are transmuted into a search for the ideal] (14; Onís 23). He states that the poem

depicts the poet going into the depth of the valley, as if he were seeking the secret of nature that he finally reaches lying on a bed of flowers. Reyes argues that the poet would like to vanish into these flowers, but he is alone and there is no joy if it is not possible to share it with others. Thus, the poet goes back to the surface looking for his people, noble friends and children walking across the valley, to share the secret of his joy with them.

This is a critical moment in the essay, because Reyes is touching one core of his future project for the Latin American intelligentsia. I believe that he finds in this poem a supernatural manifestation of the continent that the poet has accessed through the valley's nature. The poet derives from the heart of the continent itself a secret force that constitutes the natives' community. Reyes will then encourage the intellectual elite to communicate its rational understanding of Latin America with the mystical force that the continent still emanates. Although in his essay he admits to perceiving the probable adulteration of the poem due to dubious translation, he goes on to imagine that the poem was enacted in an imaginary celebratory from the past scene. I consider that he believes that the literary image that the poem conveys could nourish an idyllic vision of the continent and project an utopian vision into its future.

Reyes's analysis of another *náhoa* poem, which is related to the *Quetzalcóatl* cycle, also embodies elements of his project for the cultural re-foundation of the continent. He argues that this cycle is one of the most important in the *Nahua* cosmogony. He explains that *Quetzalcóatl* was a symbol of civilization that has been lost. He was a prophet and, at the same time, a solar myth. He analyzes the *náhoa* poem as a tearful eulogy to the disappearance of this hero. He stresses that it is similar to those eulogies to Persephone, Adonis, or Tammuz, which were popular in Europe and hence he connects the native poetry with universal culture, which is

another of the guidelines that he provides in his presentation for the cultural collective project. He writes about the *náhoa* poem:

> Sólo que, a diferencia de lo que sucede en las costas del Mediterráneo, aquí el héroe tarda en resucitar, tal vez nunca resucitará. De otro modo hubiera triunfado sobre el dios sanguinario y zurdo de los sacrificios humanos, e, impidiendo la dominación del bárbaro azteca, habría transformado la historia mexicana. El quetzal, el pájaro iris que anuncia el retorno de este Nuevo Arturo, ha emigrado, ahora, hacia las regiones ístmicas del Continente, intimado acaso nuevos destinos. (16)
>
> Except that in contrast with those originating along the coasts of the Mediterranean, here the resurrection of the hero is long deferred; perhaps he will never return. Otherwise he would have triumphed over the bloodthirsty, sinister god of the human sacrifices and, thwarting the domination of the barbarous Aztec, would have changed the history of Mexico. The quetzal, the rainbow bird that will announce the return of this new Arthur, has now migrated to the region of the isthmus, perhaps foretelling a change of destiny. (Onís 26)

In his words emerges again the connection between actual natural features and natural processes (the emigration of the bird), and the utopian vision of *Quetzalcóatl*'s return as a possible alternative history for the Mexican valley.

Reyes also draws a parallel between different cultural expressions, but each of these expressions preserves its specific characteristics.[115] The pre-Hispanic's eulogy crystallizes a sad sentiment in its remembrance of the hero, similarly to the Europeans' eulogies. Nevertheless, he distinguishes that in the *náhoa* poem the return of the hero is uncertain and perhaps will never happen. Moreover, the medium through which its return may be announced, *el quetzal*, has emigrated, which suggests that if the return of *Quetzalcóatl* occurs it will be in another region. But, in spite of the specific features of this eulogy, Reyes seals the affinity between this one with its European counterparts when he refers to the hero *Quetzalcóatl* as "este nuevo Arturo," linking the pre-Hispanic prophet with the legendary king (16).

The sad nuance that Reyes perceives in the *náhoa* poem, with respect to the only slightly probable return of the hero, who would have changed the bloody tradition of human sacrifices that the Aztecs imposed on the region, may shed light on previous passages of his poetic essay. For instance, it may be interesting to consider that the social drama that he believes takes place in the Mexican valley, the tragic fate of the people living there, might have turned out differently with the advent of *Quetzalcóatl*. Furthermore, the improbable coming of the prophet, who is a symbol of civilization, could also be thought as an allegory for the impossibility of projecting a utopian vision on the region.

[115] Jorge Luis Borges, in a short article published in *Sur* after Reyes' death, writes: "[…] la memoria de Alfonso Reyes […] era virtualmente infinita y le permitía el descubrimiento de secretas y remotas afinidades, como si todo lo escuchado o lo leído estuviera presente, en una suerte de mágica eternidad" [Alfonso Reyes' memory was virtually infinite and allowed him to discover secret and remote affinities, as if all that has ever been listened or read was already present in a sort of magical eternity] (2). Amelia Barili claims that Borges' words rely on his perception that Reyes in his work performs an audacious manipulation of the European culture, without excessive reverence to it (159).

Nevertheless, I consider that Reyes in his poetic essay conjures the coming of *Quetzalcóatl* as the symbol of the utopia that the natives project on the region.[116] I believe that he recuperates the legend of the lost hero to restore this utopian vision, as he does with the European utopian visions projected on the continent, which are the point of departure for his essay. Hence, I consider that Reyes includes in his poetic essay two different kinds of utopian visions, the Náhoa's utopia and the European utopias projected on America. What are the connections between the two? Does Reyes provoke a creative dialectical reflux of the pre-Hispanic's utopian vision over the European's visions? If there is an intersection between the two or a dialectical relationship, he does not mention them explicitly in this essay.[117] He only links the *Quetzalcóatl* legend with European legends by considering the similarity between the literary forms in which the heroes are remembered. I think of the native utopia and the European utopias as two independent sequences, which either intersect at some point in time or, when placed in close proximity, cause the elements that constitute one of the sequences to resonate in the other, and vice versa. Both possibilities could be considered, but Reyes does not point out a specific intersection or resonance between the two utopias. He only illuminates both sequences and, as they emerge in close proximity in his essay, he seems to engender a third and new utopian vision of America. The possible connections between the native utopia and the European utopian visions remain in silence, as if they were secret.[118]

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[116] See Florescano for an interesting analysis of the myths, images, and rituals associated with the figure of *Quetzalcóatl* in the foundation of Mesoamerica.

[117] There have been several attempts to link *Quetzalcóatl*'s myth with different European utopias, myths and legends, some of them appealing to dubious historiography and anthropological research. For instance, see López Portillo et al.

[118] I am bearing in mind, in my analysis of Reyes' poetic essay, the notion that Robb formulates: "estructura esteroscópica," to think about how Reyes introduces in his work two perspectives that intersect in order to create a third new perspective (55). I believe this sort of structure is possible to distinguish in his essay.

In the fourth and last section, Reyes suggests that it would be necessary to go through a sort of pilgrimage towards the Mexican valley's past to recuperate the utopian visions projected on it, but that this pilgrimage would have as its goal the restoration of a new utopian vision in the present and its projection into America's future. Thus, he argues that it is necessary to find the bond that links the American present to the pre-Hispanic civilization's past. He states that this bond is not necessarily based on a similar race or on blood ties, but rather that the Americans are inevitably tied to the pre-Hispanic civilizations because they belong to the same community. He claims that this community that has survived has been created by their common effort of subduing their brave nature, which he believes is in turn the reason for their brutal history. Furthermore, he asserts that the Americans' common experience of being captivated by the region's natural environment has nourished a common soul, which connects the American community at an even deeper level, once again insisting on the crucial role of nature. At the end of this section, Reyes claims that if Americans do not perceive these connections with their past, they should at least accept that the pre-Hispanic past is still palpable in their present, and that it provokes a 'historical emotion.' Otherwise, without this historical emotion, he writes: "[…]sin su fulgor, nuestro valles y nuestras montañas serían como un teatro sin luz" ["without its glow our valleys and our mountains would be like an unlighted theater"] (17; Onís 30).

Robb argues that in Reyes' last words it is possible to perceive the discursive thread that runs through the whole essay: "[…] un sondeo en la significación del destino histórico del pueblo mexicano […]" [an exploration of the meaning of the Mexican people's historical fate](51). Nevertheless, I would like to stress that for Reyes the Mexican Valley is akin to a small cosmos that synthesizes the entire pre-Hispanic world in America. As Báez writes: "[…] Anáhuac se destaca como centro de donde irradia el ser americano de manera análoga a la

disposición arquitectónica de la metrópoli […]" [(Reyes emphasizes) Anáhuac as the center from which the American being radiates, similarly to the architectonic positioning of the metropolis" (476).[119] I believe that in his essay he transcends the Mexican valley's geographic limits. He captures the Latin American being that emanates from the valley and he projects it towards the entire continent's future as an utopia.

I consider that Reyes' view of the Pre-Hispanic past seeks for what has not been apprehended, said, or thought before to assume the responsibility of enouncing it as something that is still present. As Amelia Barili points out, Reyes' essays is not limited to adding or juxtaposing the Europeans' visions to his vision of the Mexican Valley.[120] Rather, as he introduces what has been perceived through the European lens, he addresses what they could not comprehend. Hence he provokes a dialectical resistance that opposes his autochthonous view on America's past to the 'paternal' European vision of it to create a new portrayal of the Latin American essence. Meanwhile the sources that nourished this Americanism, which he evokes as a new utopian vision of the continent, remain ciphers from a European perspective.[121] In his essay he introduces the view of the *other*: the European. Nevertheless, in making visible the secrets that have remained obscured for foreign eyes, he provokes a creative reverberation over the original European vision, which then engenders a new vision of America.

Reyes seems to believe that these secrets are still lying in the deep layers of the Mexican Valley: in the lost civilizations that dwelled on it, in their language and poetry, in their

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[119] Báez words address Reyes's depiction of Tenochtitlan; "[…] como una inmensa flor de piedra, comunicada a tierra firme por cuatro puertas y tres calzadas, anchas de dos lanzas jinetas" ["like an immense stone flower, linked to the land by four gates and three highways the width of two lances" (6; Onís 9).

[120] See Barilli, 158.

[121] Barilli argues that Reyes cyphers the Americanism in his texts not in external aspects, such as national identities already marked by certain origin, but in a lively experience that it has to be performed by the *inteligencia americana*, in order to achieve a more genuine expression of itself (156).

cosmogony and in their tragic fate. However, paradoxically, as I have pointed out, these secrets do not remain hidden in the poetic essay. They are enounced through many silences. Reyes displays and ramifies his narrative around them, and these secrets emerge in the poetic essays. He traces them and points out their location, but they remain forbidden to the Europeans, who seem to not understand the knowledge that emanates from them. Hence, these secrets affect the essay's narrative structure, because when he assumes the view of the *other* there is an edge that limits the possibility of grasping these secrets from this perspective. There are two premises implied in this narrative structure. First, that Reyes, as the narrator in the poetic essay, is in a position to apprehend the secrets that the European travelers cannot. Second, it follows that there are boundaries around these secrets, and that he is capable of watching over who can and who cannot grasp these secrets.

In sum, Reyes believes that due to its unique historical and geographical coordinates, the *inteligencia americana* is able to apprehend these secrets encrypted in the history of the continent and to derive from them the secret knowledge that they convey, as he does in his analysis of the native poetry. He will urge the Latin American intelligentsia to appropriate the European utopian visions projected on the continent in order to perceive what they were not able to perceive directly through these visions, but also to use their cultural instruments. Thus, the Latin American intellectuals can promote a creative reverberation over the original European utopian vision to create a new utopian vision of the continent, which would be nourished by the secret knowledge that they alone can comprehend. This utopian vision would be a new point of departure and a new axis around which the American intelligentsia should be configured in order to carry out a cultural re-foundation of the continent.

Nevertheless, it does not seem to be the case that Reyes congregates all the Latin American intellectuals to decipher these secrets and interpret the secret knowledge that emanates from them. More likely, it would be a closed intellectual elite constituted by those who are able to provoke in their intellectual production a creative reflux over their European influence, in order to discover their own originality and to rediscover the originality of the continent. It would be a community of intellectuals capable of apprehending the spectral, uncanny, dreamlike, secret, non-European, utopian vision of Latin America, which seals their exclusive access to these source of knowledge and enact a system of inclusion and exclusion to define who can and who cannot participate. Needless to say that this organization in Reyes' project, which I consider as a secret society since crucial aspects of its structure and functioning remain in secret, serves as a center of power that generates a narrative to create a cultural hegemony to sustain and defend the liberal state, and a social hierarchy in which intellectuals are at the top of the pyramid.

IV. Latin American Intelligentsia.

Alfonso Reyes' plan to form an intellectual elite, as it headed into the second half of the 1930s, had assumed a Pan-American scope. In 1936, he exposed this endeavor in his presentation "Notas sobre la inteligencia americana," in the context of the *Septième Entretien de l'Organisation de Coopération Intellectuelle* of the United Nations meetings, which focused on the topic: "Rapports actuels des cultures d'Europe et d'Amérique latine."[122] In this essay, Reyes

[122] Reyes' earlier article "Un paso de America," first published in his journal *Monterrey* on October 1930 and then appropriated by *Sur*'s editorial board for that journal's first issue the following year, anticipated the content of his presentation. The series of colloquiums took place in Buenos Aires in September 1936.

points out the cultural operations that Latin American intellectuals ought to follow to preserve the universal culture from the imminent fall of Europe. He also illuminates the path that would lead them to a cultural re-foundation of the continent, placing Latin American culture within the universal culture. He challenges the Latin American intellectuals to rediscover the continent. Furthermore he urges them to embrace a new utopian vision of the region that would serve as the axis around which the Latin American intelligentsia should be configured in order to intervene in the continent's present, and in order to project this ideal vision towards its future. [123]

Reyes' cultural project for the Latin American intellectual elite is based on a sort of *ethos*, which I summarize along the following guidelines: a) Provoke a cultural synthesis through an appropriation of the universal culture while attending to the particularities of Latin America, which should lead the *inteligencia americana* to place the Latin American culture within the universal culture; b) Include the view of the *other*, i.e. the European thought, that entails a multiplicity of perspectives on the object that is contemplated: Latin America; c) Appropriate the European utopian vision once projected on the continent. The *inteligencia americana* ought to renew and transform this vision, relying on its particular historical and geographical coordinates, to distinguish what has not been perceived, said, or thought before about the continent; d) The Latin American intelligentsia has to create a new utopian vision of the continent as a new point of departure around which the intellectual elite should be structured. It should carry out a cultural

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During the same days, Buenos Aires was also hosting the 14th PEN International Congress. In contrast to the series of conferences in which Reyes delivers his presentation, however, the PEN congress was open to the public. The *Entretien*'s colloquiums were open exclusively to intellectuals, such as G. Duhamel, P. Henríquez Ureña, J. Maritain, F. Romero, and J. Romains. For a further analysis of the intellectual debates that took place during those days in Buenos Aires, see Manzoni.

[123] Manzoni points out that the concept of "inteligencia" in Reyes' presentation seems to derive from the original Russian concept of intelligentsia (14). I strongly agree with her analysis and I would like to stress that, considering the context of Reyes' presentation and the specific goals of his cultural project, he does not address all Latin American intellectuals, but rather an exclusive intellectual elite.

re-foundation of America and a 'cultural operation' to intervene in the continent's political, social and cultural dynamics. This cultural re-foundation for the continent should be expressed in a new experience of enunciation, which as I will later argue Reyes had already articulated in his previous more creative writing.

Reyes particularly focuses on the Latin American intellectual elite's main features, on its vision of life in the continent and on its actions within social life. He first characterizes the intellectual elite by pointing out its audacity. He asserts that this audacity derives from a perceived lack of continuous intellectual tradition, a perception fostered by the Latin Americans' detachment from their pre-Hispanic past. The Latin American intellectual elite was more receptive to the French thought, because it found "[…] en Europa una visión de lo humano más universal, más básica, más conforme con su propio sentir" [a European vision of the human that was more universal, more basic and in tune with its own feeling] (232). Nevertheless, he claims that the Latin American intelligentsia is less specialized than its European counterpart. The social structure in which the Latin American intellectuals inscribe themselves forces them to be close to society at large, because they have to work in other fields to secure financial support. He believes that the advantage of this situation is that the intellectuals have to breathe the air of the streets. They are not enclosed in ivory towers, and so he believes that they have a stronger connection with the common people than the European intellectuals.[124]

Nevertheless Reyes claims that the *inteligencia americana* does not neglect European thought. On the contrary, he argues that the Latin American intellectuals have an internationalist nature. He asserts that they have always applied European knowledge in their analyses of

[124] Manzoni points out that Reyes: "[…] no parece tomar entonces suficientemente en cuenta que la experiencia de los escritores europeos en esos años de intensa lucha política y de compromiso se había vuelto más cercana a la de sus colegas latinoamericanos de lo que había sido jamás[…]" (15).

historical and social processes in their region. The Latin American intellectuals have absorbed, from the early beginning of their education, European cultural instruments. Thus, he urges the Latin American intellectuals to address this cultural synthesis in their intellectual productions. But Reyes seeks to radicalize this cultural synthesis, appropriating the European influence in a subversive manner. He argues that as the Latin American intelligentsia combines European knowledge with their autochthonous cultural instruments, it should illuminate Latin America's specific characteristics that are not possible to apprehend relying only on European theoretical tools. Hence he promotes a new kind of cultural synthesis that produces new knowledge and generates the innovation of European cultural instruments.

Reyes encourages the *inteligencia americana* to meet this challenge, a responsibility that encompasses another fundamental task. He asserts that the Latin American intelligentsia should embrace and accomplish the dream that once inspired the European utopian vision projected on the continent; "[…] el sueño de la Utopía, de la república feliz, que prestaba singular calor a las páginas de Montaigne, cuando se acercaba a contemplar las sorpresas y las maravillas del Nuevo Mundo" [the Utopian dream of the happy republic, which gave a singular nuance to Montaigne's pages, when he approached to contemplate the surprises and marvels of the New World] (234). He clarifies that the cultural synthesis that he urges the *inteligencia americana* to promote is not a summary of the basic precepts of the European culture. If it were, this would mean that this synthesis was just a point of arrival in the development of the European culture. On the contrary, the cultural synthesis that the Latin American intellectual elite ought to provoke is a new point of departure. Although it relies on a structure made by previous and disperse European cultural

elements, the Latin Americans' cultural synthesis transcends this structure and produces an innovation.[125]

Reyes challenges the *inteligencia americana* to assume a position in which it absorbs the universal culture and expands it in its intellectual production, through a dialogue capable of integrating different conceptions of the world. The cultural synthesis promoted by the Mexican writer is crystallized in the following passage of his book *El Deslinde*: "[p]ara los Americanos…es mucho menos dañoso descubrir otra vez el Mediterráneo por cuenta propia (puesto que, de paso y por originalidad del rumbo, habrá que ir descubriendo algunos otros mares inéditos), que no el mantenernos en postura de eternos lectores y repetidores de Europa" [for the American is less harmful to discover again the Mediterranean sea by themselves—since, following this unique trajectory, will be necessary to discover other unknown seas—than remain in our passive posture of eternal readers and repeaters of Europe] (18-19). He advocates for a cultural repetition, but for a repetition that implies an audacious cultural operation to rediscover Latin America and provoke a new cultural foundation specifically for the American continent.

The *inteligencia americana* should appropriate the universal culture and this appropriation should be accomplished while integrating the distinctive characteristics of the Latin American culture. Thus, Reyes encourages the *inteligencia americana* to orient its efforts toward a rediscovery of the continent's cultural specificities. Such a rediscovery would produce

[125] Amelia Barili points out that the cultural synthesis that Reyes encourages does not mean to passively accept the European culture that has been imposed on America, but is rather a selective appropriation, from a Latin American perspective, of the European culture's legacy (145). She claims that Angel Rama has called this appropriation transculturation or neoculturation. Barili points out the Reyes does not intend to imitate the European culture, his aim is that *inteligencia americana* creates the American culture again (145). This would imply to reinterpret the European culture's legacy from the specific historical and cultural circumstances of Latin America, but it is not a reverence to this legacy. On the contrary, as the *inteligencia americana* appropriates this legacy in an irreverent manner, it is able to transform it as if it were its own culture.

an experience similar to that of the Europeans, when they first envisioned the existence of the new world and then 'discovered' the continent. But the Latin American intelligentsia has to dislocate the Europeans' dominant position in the representations of the Americas, a position which has been seized through European's narratives. The *inteligencia americana* ought to assume the risk of being the source of enunciation that defines its own culture and that places it within the universal culture.

For Reyes this could be accomplished by following one of two different options. This is one of the dilemmas with which he challenges the Latin American intellectual elite to meet. The first option is for the intelligentsia to reject European thought in order to found a uniquely American culture. He argues that such a choice would be based on "superstitious fears," and would inevitably lead to the necessity of creating new theoretical frameworks (*El Deslinde,* 18). He encourages the *inteligencia americana* to choose a second option, one that retains the audacity of relying on the Latin American perspective when thinking about America, but which contrasts its perspective with the European's projections on the region. This option implies an appropriation of the European culture, but as the Latin American intellectuals apply the European cultural instruments to the unique context of America, they provoke an innovation of these foreign elements.[126]

The Latin American intellectual elite should intensify the contradiction between local and foreign cultural instruments through a new experience of enunciation. It must use the lens polished by the European intellectuals, but use it to shed light on previously hidden facets of

[126] Roberto Hozven argues that Reyes highlights the necessity of causing a creative reflux of the original over the paternal that configures a dialectical resistance, in which the native signifiers that are created by the *inteligencia americana* to understand the distinctive characteristics of the continent are opposed to the foreign interpretations imposed on these features.

America. By appropriating European cultural instruments to reflect on Latin America and going beyond European thought's limits to apprehend the nuance of the region, Reyes believes the *inteligencia americana* would be able to create a new Latin American knowledge and promote a cultural re-foundation that would project a new utopian vision of the continent. Breathing the air of the Latin American streets, comprehending the social phenomena that are configured in such a unique space, the *inteligencia americana* recodifies the European influence on itself and on the concepts that it uses, and creates new conceptual constellations to think about the object that it contemplates, in order to transform this object and affect its functioning.[127]

Nevertheless, Reyes does not advocate for a Latin American intelligentsia exclusively focused on the events that take place on the continent. On the contrary, he clearly states that he advocates for a Latin American literature neither confined to its natural boundaries nor exclusively concentrated on depicting local characteristics. He affirms that at the time of his presentation new winds are flowing into the region, propelling a new generation of intellectuals, who have already started to embrace this project. He believes that this new generation is prepared to recuperate and project a utopian vision of the continent, which was first envisioned by European thought. He hopes that these intellectuals, assimilating the European cultural instruments while addressing the particularities of the region, will create new narratives to understand and affect the functioning of America. But he insists that it would be necessary to go beyond the visible manifestations that emerge in the region and apprehend what has remained hidden behind the visible scenario.

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[127] In this sense, Reyes, in "Valor de la literatura hispanoamericana," writes: "[a]l mundo no debemos mostrar canteras y sillares, sino a ser posible edificios ya construidos. De lo contrario tendremos que resignarnos a ser mal entendidos; o a que los extraños nos hagan el edifcio conforme a perspectivas desviadas; o lo que es peor a que este edifcio pretendan levantarlo los supernumerarios de las culturas extranjeras[…]como ha ocurrido algunas veces" (128).

For Reyes there it seems to be a latent utopian seed in the veins of Latin America, encrypted in deep layers of its past, which he believes still defines it, and that it is crucial for the Latin American intellectual elite to interpret it in order to make it flourish. He thinks about what has remained invisible as if it were an ideal vision fed by a mystical force, akin to the European utopian visions of the pre-Hispanic world, but one that does not advocate for a romantic regression to the past. Reyes promotes this utopia as a new point of departure for the *inteligencia americana*. He believes that this should be the new scenario in which the Latin American intelligentsia would be capable of understanding the originality of America in order to intervene in its functioning. He closes his presentation by announcing that the continent has already matured and soon western civilization will be transform by the achievements of this cultural re-foundation; "[…] y ahora yo digo ante el tribunal de pensadores internacionales que me escucha: reconocemos el derecho a la ciudadanía universal que ya hemos conquistado. Hemos alcanzado la mayoría de edad. Muy pronto os habituaréis a contar con nosotros" [and now, I claim before the tribunal of international thinkers that are listening to me: we reconginzed the right to universal citizenship that we have conquered. We have reached the legal age. Soon you will get use to count on us] (73).[128]

Therefore, the new experience of enunciation that Reyes encourages the Latin American intellectual elite to perform in its intellectual production implies two simultaneous maneuvers,

[128] Roberto Fernández Retamar, in his essay *Calibán*, highlights the performativity of Reyes' words as he asserts that the time that the author had prophesied about the cultural re-foundation of America it had arrived in 1959, in the event of the Cuban Revolution. He claims that Reyes' cultural re-foundation is only possible to achieve through a revolution. He writes: "[…]nuestra cultura es –y sólo puede ser– hija de la revolución, de nuestro multisecular rechazo a todos los colonialismos; nuestra cultura, al igual que toda cultura, requiere como primera condición nuestra propia exitencia" (63). Retamar, in line with Reyes' thought, argues that Latin Americans have to appropriate their European cultural legacy in a subversive manner, in order to apprehend their own originality. For Retamar the cultural revolution is a consequence of this reaffirmation of the Latin American independent being, which has to be rediscovered and re-created.

which should be intertwined in a new Latin American narrative. On the one hand, it should express a subversive and rational appropriation of European cultural instruments. On the other hand, it should express an intuitive perception of a sort of mysticism that the continent still emanates, which in turn should convey the originality of the Latin American being and nourish a new utopia for the continent. Robert Conn has already examined the first maneuver; he traces how Reyes appropriates word and texts from the past through his philological approach. His contention is that there is a performativity in Reyes' philology, which serves to position him at the top of the hierarchy of the Latin American intellectual elite and functions to organize this intellectual community. Philology for Reyes is not only a literary and theoretical instrument. He also projects through this reconstructive activity to found and legitimate a community of artists and intellectuals.[129]

Conn points out two main consequences of Reyes' philological approach: the construction of institutions and the formation of an intellectual consciousness. He argues that Reyes' project consists in organizing the intellectual elite under the umbrella of a massive literary institution, in which writers and scholars could participate in the same cultural dialogue. However, he claims that Reyes, rather than creating a common space for the intellectual debate, established "complex cultural hierarchies subordinating historical events and literary and intellectual movements and figures" (15). It was not an attempt to bring together a community of

[129] Conn asserts that Reyes considers that this community of artist and intellectuals should be inspired by the 'Classical Weimar': the German Enlightenment and the humanism of Goethe and Schiller, to provide the guidelines for the new political regime that was arising after the revolution. He writes that in this manner Reyes' work "[…]produced the limits of an intellectual and artistic community," which he defines as an "[a]esthetic State [or], more specifically, as a utopian Mexico and Latin American Republic of Letters, a Weimar, of sorts" (14). Conn uses the term 'Aesthetic State' to allude to the aristocratic framework of the modernizing *German Kleinstaat*, in which the institutions of art and literature embody Culture. In this State, which the intellectual circle associated with Goethe, Weimar, and German Classicism inspired, the intellectuals perceive themselves as belonging to a literary community in an ongoing conversation with this community.

intellectuals, but rather an attempt to form an hegemonic intellectual consciousness in his cultural milieu.

Reyes envisages literary institutions that open a space for the enlightened bourgeoisie to find its self-fulfillment. He pretends to form this institution as a space in which collectively it is possible to generate the cultural and ideological support for the structure of a liberal state. Conn argues that this is the intellectual consciousness that Reyes attempts to generate in his contemporary intellectual elite. He seeks to form an intellectual and artistic community that should hold together and defend a liberal government facing its possible disintegration. Reyes has probably perceived in the uprising of the masses in the Mexican Revolution, then in the consolidation of Fascism and Nazism in Europe, and also in the socialist utopias promoted in Latin America, a menace against the liberal state. Thus Conn asserts that Reyes attempts to conjure away the criticism against the liberal Latin American romantic tradition of the nineteenth century by promoting a hermeneutic that he believes could actually produce a further development of the Latin American intelligentsia. Reyes envisions an intellectual community in which individual thinkers participate in the same dialogue about the becoming of Latin America and develop the highest understanding of the continent, while defending universal and cosmopolitan values.

I consider Conn's work to be an important contribution to understanding the implications of Reyes' cultural project and how philology functions in his intellectual production as an instrument to perform his intellectual authority, and to organize the intellectual elite, by appropriating words and texts from the past. Nevertheless, I attempt to draw attention to the second maneuver that Reyes encourages the intellectual elite to perform in its intellectual production: the apprehension of what has remained invisible, buried in the Latin American past

and overshadowed by the European narratives about the continent. I propose to consider that Reyes believes that there is a sort of mystical force that the continent still emanates. He apprehends this mysticism through some key words and texts that he introduces in his work. Although Reyes analyzes texts and words as objects of study, which he scrutinizes as a philologist through rational and empirical methods, he bestows with an esoteric density some words and texts in particular. He intensifies an obscure dimension especially in poetic words and literary texts that convey a mystical force that Latin America emanates. As he combines this mystical force with his secular knowledge, he creates the utopian vision that he projects for the continent in his narrative.

In attention to the performativity of Reyes' intellectual production, its sociological effects and political implications, it should also be considered addressing how it functions in his work the esoteric dimension in which there is a communication between mysticism and secular knowledge. My contention is that this articulation, which I believe is the same communication between secular knowledge and mysticism that he suggests the intellectual elite perform, affects the structure and dynamic of the intellectual community that he aims to organize and defend. I consider that it is around this obscure dimension that the structure of the closed intellectual elite as he conceives it is configured and I will attempt later to demonstrate that there are crucial aspects of this structure, and the functioning of this closed community, that remain hidden.

Michel Foucault explains that for the modern philologist language becomes an empirical object of knowledge in the nineteenth century.[130] Nevertheless, he explains that in the field of this discipline there have been raised compensations to balance this "demotion" of language, demoted because it is no longer considered that to know language entails to be as close as

[130] See Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 296-298.

possible to knowledge, as was thought during the Renaissance, but rather to access to a "particular domain of objectivity" (296). Facing this "demotion" of language modern philology claims for itself a fundamental critical function: to be capable of unveiling the true significances of words. Philology points out that in men's speech a battle is fought, and it aims to demonstrate that while people think that they master their speech, there are hidden meanings of words that in fact regulate men's actions. Foucault states that the modern philologist thinks that seizing the truth discourse provides a rational understanding of men's actions. However, he argues that as the philologist believes that he could objectively illuminate the hidden meaning of words, he restores the "enigmatic density" that language had during the Renaissances (298). But rather than unburying primary words' roots that structure our speech, philology points out that there is a dimension in language that for common men remains an enigma and that haunts their actions. As I will demonstrate, Reyes is akin to a modern philologist who embraces and intensifies the obscure density of some key words.

In the essay "El misticismo activo" (1917), Reyes argues that the value of words relies on their second hidden meanings. It is in the obscure halo of resonances of these meanings that the soul of each era is revealed, "en las connotaciones oscuras y hasta no explicadas" [in the obscure connotation and even never explained] (272). Individual and collective behaviors proceed combining the different tinged meanings of words, which are degraded and combined in the individual's actions. It is due to the variations of the combinations of these obscure meanings that words prevail, since the manner in which they are employed is always evolving. There is a word's signifier that cannot be reflected in the word. This signifier, which is constantly changing its meaning as it combines with other hidden signifiers, cannot be entirely grasped by attributing a fixed significance to the word.

Reyes, as if he were the modern philologist whom Foucault depicts, thinks that language is an object of study and that there is a hidden repository of meanings in words that regulates men's actions. Thus I consider that he restores the enigmatic density of language, but it is important to clarify that in his essay he does not highlight the obscure signifiers of words with similar intentions as the modern philologist, who does so aiming to provide compensations against the demotion of his discipline. Reyes focuses on the hidden meaning of words because he believes that mysticism, when it is not already attached to a religious sense, moves towards these obscure significances of words. In his essay, he provisionally defines mysticism as a disinterested effort: "todo impulso que ignora su fin o que lo ha olvidado o no lo tiene y que se agota, por eso, en un holocausto incesante. Toda energía que, en su desborde, ahoga la conciencia, toda fuerza que se vuelve loca"[every impulse that ignores its goal or that has forgotten it, or that it does not have an goal, and thus dry out in an unceasing holocaust. All energy that in its overflowing drowns the counscousnes, every force that goes mad] (273). He claims that mysticism is a dynamic force without fixed finality. It is a vital drive of a creature eager to overcome the conception of a creator, which it can either project as a god or a devil. But he affirms that mysticism is secular in its procedure and does not necessarily have to be subjugated by an idol. In fact, he asserts, it could exceed it.

The crucial relevance that Reyes grants to the manifestation of mysticism stems from his conviction that this force could trigger a tremendous vital drive in men and women that propels them to actively intervene in the world. In his essay there seems to be a parallel interpellation to his historical context during the First War World. As if the tragic events that took place at that time in Europe should be interpreted as the consequence of the liberation of a mystical force that captured by national passions turned the vital drive that mysticism liberates in one of death,

throwing thousands of men to died in the trenches. Or, asserting a prophetic nuance in his words, as if the horror that Europe will witness years later could be considered as the becoming of a mystical force that was subjugated by the adoration of an idol.

Reyes introduces the example of the soldier's mysticism, which he derives from his reading of William James, to claim that at the soldier's heart there is a kind of mysticism, because the soldier without thinking it should be available to abandon every material thing: the city, his home and family, and put at risk his life in the battlefield. In "The Value of Saintliness," James compares the military type self-severity with that of the ascetic saint and he reflects on the difference in their spiritual concomitants. He writes: "[i]f the soldier is to be good for anything as a soldier, he must be exactly the opposite of a reasoning and thinking man" (366). This irrational instinct, which James argues that war trains as an universal school, makes him to be always ready to act without any kind of attachment to material things. He argues that this spirit should be an example to follow: "[w]hat we now need to discover in the social realm is the moral equivalent of war: something heroic that will speak to men as universally as war does[…]" (367). In the monkish poverty-worship, James argues, there must be something similar to war that we should seek: a material detachment as an exaltation of life that does not need of crushing weaker people. Reyes encourages us to assume this kind of detachment that characterizes a nomadic way of living propelled by a vital force that opens the possibility to exert an active mysticism in the world, which he affirms would allow us to posses and unfold all the vital energy that we have to intervene in the world.

I believe that Reyes attempts to grasp the mystical force that the continent emanates by introducing key words and texts, which convey a utopian vision for the continent. He appropriates the visible meanings of these words and texts, and he provides a rational

understanding of them. However, he does not clearly illuminate the obscure meanings that these texts and words bear for him. On the contrary, he seems to encode these obscure signifiers in his narrative, as will be revealed in the analysis of his more creative writing. It is in only when one places them in adjacency and association to the conceptual pillars of his intellectual production that a resonance occurs and the encoded meanings that he attributes to them can be perceived. But even when one captures in the reading of his texts these hidden meanings and tries to conceptualize them, they still provoke a reverberation that suggests deeper secret signifiers in them, which the author seems to master and does not completely reveal in his words. He emerges as a kind of sorcerer, who steadily reveals some secret knowledge that he apprehends and conjures the mysticism that it emanates. He also arises as a kind of sovereign that administrates this source of knowledge exclusively intended for a selective community of readers.

How is an intellectual elite configured that carries out this operation of encoding hidden meanings of words and texts in its intellectual production and then control the access to this source of knowledge? Reyes could give us some answers to this question in an essay that he wrote in 1922, "De algunas sociedades secretas." In this essay, he drops some hints about how closed groups of intellectuals are configured around the exclusive knowledge that they have ciphered in their understanding of texts. He provides an insight into the dynamics of these groups as he depicts the formation of closed circles of writers lead by the Spanish writer known as 'Azorín'. He points out that 'Azorín' has founded two secret groups: "Los Amigos de Lope de Vega" y "El Góngora Club," and he argues that nobody knows who their members are or where their secret sessions take place (380-381). Nevertheless, Reyes reveals his participation in them. He writes that he has named himself the perpetual secretary of the "Góngora Club," and about the meeting: "[e]s posible que algunas reuniones sean agitadas" (381). Reyes also unveils his

belief that the members of these exclusive groups are invested with a higher intellectual authority. He mentions a quarrel that he had with Georges Cirot, a French hispanist, who criticized his approach to Lope de Vega's work, answering this critic claiming to possess a superior knowledge as a member of the secret society advocated to the study of Lope de Vega. He writes: "[a]migo, Cirot: no se ofenda usted; usted, con ser tan sabio, no es todavía 'amigo de Lope de Vega', y por eso no puede entender ciertas cosas, ciertos misterios de iniciados" [My friend Cirot: you should not be offended; you know that even though you are a wise man, your are not yet 'Lope de Vega's friend,' and this you cannot understand certain things, certain misteries exclusive for those who have been initiated] (381).

In Reyes' words there is a witty irony used to depict the groups of writers lead by "Azorín" and I do not think that he considers these closed groups of intellectuals as secret societies conspiring in the shadows against the power of the state. However, I do believe that his reflection on the groups of writers to which he belonged while he was in Spain provides a key for the analysis of how he perceives that an intellectual elite could seal a secret circle around words and texts. These intellectuals consider themselves as the true interpreters of them and they form a closed group that self-legitimizes its authority based on their understanding of these texts by cutting their ties with the community of intellectuals at large. As Reyes asserts, the members of these secret groups have been initiated in a form of higher knowledge that invests them with the authority to exclude others who have not been introduced to this secret knowledge.

The performativity of Reyes' intellectual production tends to have similar sociological effects in the formation of intellectual elites. His operation of encoding hidden meanings of some words and texts fosters the formation of a closed group of intellectuals that function as secret society. He performs his intellectual authority by positioning himself before specific words and

texts that he has made his own, and it is in the community of intellectuals at large where his authority is realized. Nevertheless, as he ciphers in these texts hidden signifiers and encrypts in them a secret knowledge only possible to apprehend by an exclusive elite of readers, he encourages the formation of closed groups of intellectuals that, as they achieve communion with his appropriation of texts, stand above the community at large. This operation strengthens an intellectual hierarchy that needs to be supported by an institution, which legitimizes the position of power of the privileged readers and writers who have set the proper understanding of texts. This institution also regulates the formation of other readers that consume the intellectual production of the privileged. These readers could become the subaltern line of defense and propagate the intellectual production of the 'true interpreters' of texts. One day, following the circuits of loyalty, reverencing the work of the 'true interpreters,' striving for their recognition, the subalterns could it be initiated in the secret knowledge that they hold and could become members of the secret society of the 'privileged intellectuals.'

The political implications of Reyes' operation of encoding secret meanings of some words and texts stems from his intention to seize through this operation the utopian vision for Latin America. In this same procedure is also encrypted the structure of the elite that has to impose this order in its present by monopolizing the narratives about the ideal order for the continent and controlling the access to the knowledge that invests them with the authority to define this order. Through its intellectual production and public interventions, while retaining in secrecy crucial aspect of its functioning and of the configuration of its structure of power, this closed group of intellectuals has to create and control the narrative that the ideal order for the continent it is that which they have defined and that it is possible to achieve with their leading

role.[131] Thus Reyes' collective intellectual project to define what the ideal is for the continent and to propagate this ideal as a cultural hegemony is an attempt to establish centers of power and knowledge that could control the dissemination of discourses about the utopia for the continent.[132]

Facing the dissemination of discourses and actual political movements, which in the first half of the twentieth century arise to radically reconfigure societies claiming to chase after utopias, Reyes' project stands as a strategy to regulate such narratives and foster a cultural hegemony that will prevent these risings. His aim is to temper the passions for radical change and restore an order in which intellectuals have a privileged role in leading the development of society. The visible functioning of this collective intellectual project is reflected in the creation of institutions, which through their hierarchies, surveillance systems and distribution of power, attempt to channel individual and collective drives for radical transformation to discourse, which

[131] In the essay "Las Utopías," Reyes defines the technical uses of the word "utopia," which I consider clarifies how he thinks about the ideal vision that he promotes for the continent. He writes: "[e]n el uso técnico, la utopía, o es una fantasía que a nadie pretende engañar, o es una presentación novelada de cosas relativamente posibles, que no existen pero pueden existir" (274). I believe that the aim of Reyes' collective intellectual project is to create a narrative about the ideal order for the continent, which could come into existence with the help of the intellectual elite.

[132] I am thinking of the configuration of a regime of power and knowledge in Reyes' project through Foucault's reflections in *The History of Sexuality*, in which he points out that a regime of power and knowledge was imposed since the seventeenth century in Europe to discipline sexual pleasures. However, he asserts that at the level of discourses and their domains, this regime of repression fostered the proliferation of discourses about sex (20). He argues that in the eighteenth century sex became a "police" matter, not in order to repress a disorder, but to maximize the order of collective and individual forces. He points out that the new regime of discourse established a whole series of mechanisms "operating in different institutions" that produced a multiplicity of discourses about sex (33). Nevertheless, he explains that while modern societies exploits sex as a secret they just dedicate themselves to speak about sex *ad infinitum*. He argues that the mechanisms that were established in the nineteenth century are more focused on the need for discourses on sex to be grounded on an uniform true knowledge about it. I believe that the structure and functioning of the closed intellectual elite that Reyes seeks to organize, which will establish a regime of power and knowledge to generate the 'true ideal order' for America, it is comparable to the mechanisms that in the eighteen and nineteenth century were established to set the ground for the 'true knowledge about sex'.

in turn has to be shaped and regulated according to the common good that the intellectual elite has defined.

This strategy is not a defensive move of withdrawing to the ivory tower. On the contrary, it is an offensive maneuver to capture the discourse of the ideal vision for the Latin American society that might be otherwise reclaimed by those who are always below. It is an attempt to prevent its emergence in a volatile population that has demonstrated it could actually threaten the ideal vision of the closed intellectual elites. In order to redirect collective and individual forces, which are clamoring for radical changes, to a system of utility that regulates them for a 'common good,' a fable is created to subjugate and overshadow the endless proliferations of discourses about the Latin American utopia. Apropos of the utopia for the continent, the closed community of intellectuals that Reyes encourages constructs an apparatus of producing the 'true utopian vision' and it institutes that knowledge as a fundamental precondition to understand it and conceive it. Thus, knowledge must remain in secret and monopolized, because who holds it also retains the power to define the ideal order for the society.

The relationship to the master who holds the secret is crucial. He is the only one entitled to work alone in the formulation of the secret knowledge and he can only transmit it in an esoteric manner. His disciple could access this knowledge as the culmination of an initiation in which the master guides him with great severity and discipline. The relationship of power, and the functioning of the hierarchy that is configured wherein, remains shrouds in obscurity to protect the secret that is transmitted. This is one of the main conditions that binds in secrecy the members of the secret society of intellectuals that Reyes' ideal vision for the continent tends to generate. The 'true utopia' for the continent is produced under obscured relations of power and,

in order to control the economy of discourses about this ideal vision, these relations must be kept secret to protect the knowledge that justifies the hierarchical structure.

Reyes derives some of these ideas from Julian Benda's ideal of the humanist as the model for the Latin American intellectual who would participate in the closed intellectual elite that he imagines.[133] In *The Treason of the Intellectuals* (1928), Benda denounces that the modern *clercs* (intellectuals) have betrayed their legacy, because they have renounced transcendental values in favor of pursuing practical and material aims. He claims that modern *clercs*, as they are engaged in the game of national politics, exacerbate the laymen's political passion, nationalism and bellicosity. He asserts that modern *clercs* have indulged themselves to be driven by fanatic patriotism. In contrast, he believes that the humanist has sensitivity for the abstract quality of what is human and it advocates for a concept of humanity. Benda writes that humanist "[…] is a pure passion of the intelligence, implying no terrestrial love" (80). Benda's humanism has a cosmopolitan spirit that affirms an abstract concept of a universal morality, which honors humanity beyond any distinction of nationality. Reyes reworks this model of the intellectual to encourage the active participation of intellectuals in the public arena, an intervention that should be based on the sacred and secret values that the continent still emanates.

Reyes' collective intellectual project is also in line with the closed community of intellectuals around the journal *Sur* –despite differences on how they conceive the scope of the intellectuals' intervention–, and with Roger Caillois' research on secret communities of intellectuals. The close kinship among these intellectuals –Reyes was a member at large of the editorial board of *Sur* and he was involved with the promotion of Caillois' work in Mexico–

[133] Reyes certainly read Benda's books as soon as they were published. This can be verified; Reyes' personal book collection contains the first editions of Benda's books. See Olguín García and Jorge Saucedo, 109-110.

were not only based on their common intellectual interests, but also on their close affinities in how they regarded the formation and dynamic of intellectual elites.[134]

Caillois also reworks Benda's book, *The Treason of the Intellectuals*, in his essay "Sociology of the Intellectual," and I consider that this essay could shed more light on the structure, dynamic and political implications of the formation of the closed elite of intellectuals that Reyes seeks to lead. In his essay, Caillois' contention is that the intellectuals' functioning and positioning in society should be defined through reference to the secularized 'Church' to which they belong, rather than to their social class. He deconstructs Benda's opposition between abstract values, such as justice or humanity, and order, which is imposed on a pragmatic world, to argue that intellectuals should not gauge society according to absolute values. He explains that the "clerics" (intellectuals) can only be considered as entitled to access to the truth of things insofar as their conception of truth is linked by actual circumstances, which means "taking a stand in the real debate of the day" (193). He states that when the "clerics" raise the question of the value of justice, about what ought to be in the world, this question can only exist in terms of the temporal; "[…] that, when put into practice, engenders a course and politics of action […]" (193).

[134] In his essay, "Sobre la novela policial" (1945), Reyes addresses Roger Caillois's work on this literary genre. Although he refrains from taking up a clear position in the quarrel that sparked between Caillois and Borges around their conception of the detective novel, he points out their essays on the detective novel: "[…] Hay un buen ensayo de Roger Caillois, y hay mil notas y luminosos atisbos en Jorge Luuis Borges…" (*Los Trabajos y los Días. Obras Completas IX*, 458). He certainly met Caillois's work through the publications of several of his essays in *Sur* journal, since 1939, and he was probably well acquainted with his research on the formation of closed communities. Circa 1940s, Caillois work was published in Mexico. In 1942 the publishing house *Fondo de Cultura Económica* translated and published his celebrated book *El hombre y lo sagrado*, which it had, as it will be explored in the next chapter of my dissertation, a fundamental impact in Octavio Paz' later work. In 1943 the publishing house *Quetzal* published *La communion des forts* and in 1945, *El Colegio de México*, while Reyes was the dean of the institution, published "Ensayo sobre el espíritu de las sectas."

Caillois believes that the concept of justice is always circumscribed within specific contexts and societies, and thus is subject to variation depending on the historical circumstances and social contexts. He emphasizes that the gap between the abstract principles of justice, which the 'clerics' conceive in the high altitudes of their thought, and the order that is actually imposed in the pragmatic world, is always traversed by social forces that the 'clerics' do not illuminate in their work. He claims that the 'clerics' are not 'impartial critics' of society, who stand above its evolution and conjuring eternal principles that should triumph in the world. He writes: "[b]etween those principles and [their] actual judgment there is a gap [that the 'clerics'] cannot properly bridge, and through this gap slide the hypocritical pressures of [their] faction's interests and every prejudice [they] unwittingly share" (195). Hence the intellectuals' perspective of the eternal is determined by personal and 'sectarian' motives, which often arise far from pure eternal values.

Caillois states that only when the 'clerics' perform some concrete function in society are they invested with authority, not as individuals, but rather because they are recognized as belonging "to a very well-defined organization that is everywhere called a Church" (197). He argues that this organization monopolizes the role of providing the true and right principles that ought to rule society, as if there were not competitors with an equal status to fulfill this function. He points out that the Church is an autocratic and infallible organization that is governed by a severe discipline. Its prestige relies on its efficacious authority to control the circulation of free speech within the organization over the official discourse. He explains that the Church, which is composed of a dense group of individuals, is constituted as an impenetrable body that recruits its members as a process of voluntary affiliation or co-optation within the society. The power of the 'clerics' relies on the organization, which stands above the society and invests its members with

'insignias' that distinguish them from the common people, and present them as the bearers of an eternal truth.

Nevertheless, Caillois insists that the power of the organization has actual meaning only when it bridges the gap between the spiritual and the temporal. Once the "clerics" have captured the sacred, their organization has to intervene in the pragmatic world, either giving support and advice to the statesmen and warriors, or judging their actions. In order to prevent the usurpation of this function, which is the same appropriation that had actually founded the Church, the organization needs a strict hierarchy that forms a strong community standing apart from the rest of society. But rather than evaluating the polis based on absolute values, Caillois claims that the 'clerics' have to conceive historical values to renew and intervene in their contexts. These values should be as "un-abstract and un-eternal as possible, but not less uplifting or ideal" (199). The 'clerics' have to create and supply practical values. Caillois claims that the history of this closed community is that of some 'Society of Jesus,' which rather than condemn from the outside, preaching with the example of its members, has to propagate, extend and make triumphant the values that have created the organization. He adds: "[t]hey spread like a contagion, and those who belong to the community form a 'Church Militant'" (199). The destiny of this closed community is to grapple with reality and introduce in the world the order that has prevailed within the organization.[135]

[135] In 1946, after Caillois received a harsh criticism for his essay from one of his old professors, he admits that he went too far in this essay, with reckless arguments on the relations between spiritual and secular power, to analyze the positioning of intellectuals in society as determined by their membership to a Church. Notwithstanding, more than two decades after this, he rectifies that his essay it was inspired by India, and the relationship between the Indian brahman cast facing the raj, which can illuminate the positioning of intellectuals above society at large. In this sense, Frank writes: "Caillois was apparently drawing on Georges Dumézil 's Flamen-Brahman (1935), a work that explored the analogies between the Indian brahman cast and the Roman corporation of the *flamen*. Both brahman and flamen served as sacred doubles or simulacra of the severing power" (191).

"Sociology of the Intellectual," which Caillois published in France in 1939 and then in 1943 reprinted in Mexico, reflects what Marcel Mauss taught him about secret communities. Mauss analyzes how, in contrast to what we usually think, secret societies do not always conspire against the power of the State. He recognizes that they can conspire, but he emphasizes that they also can fulfill a regular function within society. There could be a hidden facet of secret societies: their internal functioning, rituals and hierarchical organization, but he insists that there could also be a public facet, a degree of visibility of this functioning in society. Mauss argues that the inner circle of secret societies is defined by a fraternity cult, which structures a hierarchy that demands loyalty and obedience. The members of the organization have to respect this hierarchy in order to grow in the organization; otherwise they could be subject to punishments. The closed community has a language of its own and remains in secrecy for those who have not been initiated in the cult. But he insists that clandestine organizations are not necessary against the power of the State. On the contrary, he argues that they are compatible with both democracy and monarchy. He writes: "[t]hey are normally intertwined. To a large extent, we can say that the secret forms are intended to determine leaders: the set-up can already be called the rule of committees" (119).

Caillois, following his mentor's guidance, analyzes closed communities of intellectuals as a kind of secret organization that does not necessarily conspire against the power of the state. The organization keeps in secrecy its internal functioning and the configuration of its hierarchical structure to control the circulation of speech among its ranks. It also has a visible intervention in the public sphere, in which it inserts, imposes and spreads the values that ought to govern collective life. My contention is that Reyes' intention is to organize an intellectual elite as the secular Church that Caillois depicts, which I propose to think of as a secret society that has

both a secret and a public role. I consider that Reyes' secret society is formed to provoke a radical separation of the intellectual elite from the common people and exclusively define what is the ideal of the continent that the Latin American society has to pursue. By the same token he excludes other intellectuals, who do not coincide with the main purpose of the organization, in order to control the circulation of narratives that attempt to define an ideal vision for the continent. The conditions that this set-up imposes on those who are willing to become members of the secret community organized around his project entail that they have to subordinate their intellectual production to the textual economy that the secret organization administrates, conditions which could be easily imposed if the secret organization controlled literary institutions and publishing houses.

Reyes' appropriation of the ideal vision that he projects onto Latin America's future, which in fact is an attempt to impose an order on his actual milieu, presents this vision as if were a secret only possible to apprehend by those who were initiated in the knowledge that is required to formulate and invoke this vision. The intellectual elite that he seeks to organize functions as a secret society that claims ownership of a superior knowledge with which they will conjure the utopia for the continent. Nevertheless, I do not intend to argue that this closed intellectual community defines the utopia as a secret impossible to access for those who are not bound to the secret group, or that it is forbidden to speak about it. The utopia that Reyes creates functions as a secret in that it configures a regime of power and knowledge to discipline the conceptions of the ideal order for the continent. This regime regulates the narratives about the ideal order for the continent and designates who is invested with the intellectual authority to define this order. Furthermore, this regime is intended to conduct the desire for an ideal society in Latin America

toward discourse, rather than actively pursuing this utopia, pretending that the formulation of concepts could lead the men of actions to intervene in the actual world.

My intention in the following section, as I tackle how the regime of power and knowledge that Reyes' intellectual production sets in motion to define the 'true utopia' for the continent, will be to focus my analysis on his system of representations for the utopian vision. In his representation of this vision, literature and poetry play a major role. It is through literary images, metaphors and allegories, and especially poetic language, that he introduces this vision in his work. In this sense, Ignacio Sanchéz Prado points out that Reyes often displaces philosophy and literature to think about the questions that he raises, as with the formation of the *inteligencia americana*. Sánchez Prado writes: "Reyes entiende a la literatura en función del proyecto intelectual americano y como resultado de determinadas condiciones de la producción cultural de ese proyecto" (69). For Reyes literature can function as a concrete intervention in a historical context. Furthermore, as he claims, literature can transform and regenerate the ethical and social milieu.[136]

In *El Deslinde*, *Prolégomenos a la teoría literaria* (1944), Reyes distinguishes two different kinds of literature: "literatura en pureza" [pure literature] and "literatura ancilar" [ancillary literature] (40). The former, drama, novels or poetry, is intended only for its own sake, as Reyes points out: "la expresión agota en sí misma su expresión" [the expression dries out in its own expression] (40). In the latter, the literary expression serves to convey specific contents or ends, which are not literary. He points out that even non-literary texts can carry out this function of literature. While pure literature communicates a pure experience: the infinite of the human experiences, the non-literary elements of the "literatura ancilar" address specific facets of

[136] See Reyes, *El Deslinde*, 215.

the human experience. He explains that the literary is a mental exercise that precedes literature (43). It could be crystallized in pure literature or it could remain in an abstract and metaphorical state. It could also devolve into the "literatura ancilar" and, in this case, to the literary are attached systems of concepts orbiting around it that have a "función ancilar" (45). The "función ancilar" could also emerge as a borrowing from the literary to the non-literary or *vice versa*. For instance, he argues that literature carries out this functioning when it introduces certain facts and, either distorting them or insisting on them, seeks a criticism of these facts. He points out that another case of the "literatura ancilar" is the "literatura aplicada," which borrows literary elements and introduces a poetic nuance in the non-literary text (45). Nevertheless, he clarifies that these terms can only be distinguished theoretically in ideal types and, in fact, there are different degrees in which the borrowings from the literary to the non-literary, and *vice versa*, emerge in the texts.

In the last sections of the present chapter, my analysis will focus on Reyes' more creative writing in which he performs the "función ancilar," borrowing from literature –images, metaphors, allegories and poetic words– to project an utopian vision for the continent, and to convey the mysticism that he believes still emanates from it. However, I will not point out the "función ancilar" in his texts. Rather I will illuminate Reyes' strategies to seize the utopian vision for the continent's future by manipulating literary elements. I will analyze how his narrative conveys the order that he seeks to impose in the continent's present and the structure that a closed elite of intellectuals, which keeps secret crucial aspects of its functioning, has to assume to accomplish this task.

V. *Última Tule*: Mysticism and Secular Knowledge.

Reyes might have borrowed from Pytheas's *Ultima Thule* the title for his meditation on the imaginary land evoked since ancient history. He could had in mind Virgil's *Georgics*, in which the expression "ultima Thule" refers to the edge of the known world, as he chose the title for his book, *Ultima Tule* (1942), which is centrally focused on the utopian vision that the explorers followed toward America.[137] He fervently dedicated his life to reading classical and ancient writers, and he wrote several passages on Virgil's work, hence his influence seems to be clear. Reyes introduces the expression in the essay "El presagio de américa," quoting Seneca and alluding to America as the continent that the Latin writer prophesized would appear beyond the horizons.[138] He embraces the expression "Última Tule," as I will later argue, as a literary image for the dream world that the European envisioned and chased in their quest for the new world, and as the utopian vision that he believes the continent still reflects. But, beyond these clear influences on Reyes' choice to introduce the expression in his essay and for the title of his book, I consider that it would be impossible to argue that he overlooked the fact that Rodó also introduces the expression in *Ariel* (1900). The Uruguayan writer, who was a mentor and a primary intellectual model for Reyes, also cites the expression, but as one element of a parable about a hospitable king, which at first glance seems to convey a different meaning than the references noted above.

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[137] In *Georgics*, Virgil writes: "…ac tua nautae/ Numina sola colant, tibi serviat ultima Thule,/ Teque sibi generum Tethys emat omnibus undis…" (1-4).

[138] In *Medea* Seneca writes: "[…] Rhenumque bibunt–venient annis / saecula seris, quibus Oceanus / vincula rerum laxet et ingens / pateat tellus Tethysque novos / detegat orbes nec sit terries / ultima Thule" (36).

Prospero, the old and admired teacher in *Ariel*, who is named by his students after the wizard in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, is delivering a lecture in the last class of the year. In this farewell lecture, he invokes the symbolic tension between Ariel and Caliban in Shakespeare's play, and focuses on the necessity that the force of reason and the noble spirit, which characterize Ariel, must prevail upon the unreasonable force and low instincts, which characterize Caliban, in the development of the Latin American youth. In the third chapter of Rodó's book, Prospero states that each individual has to preserve within himself an interior freedom under any material conditions, even if subjugated in slavery, and that this inner dimension should be a safe refuge for reasoning and noble sentiments. He finds a symbol of the soul's structure that he promotes in an old story about a 'hospitable King.' Prospero tells his students that this King's charity was so immense, that he opened his palace to whoever needed him.[139]

The king's alcazar was the house of the people and its portal had never been guarded. But in the depth of the palace, isolated from the noise made in the passageways, hidden from vulgar eyes, there was a hall of mystery, which no one was allowed to enter, only the king himself; "[…] cuya hospitalidad se trocaba en sus umbrales en la apariencia de ascético egoísmo. Ni un eco del bullicio exterior[…] lograban traspasar el espesor de los sillares del pórfido y conmover una onda del aire en la prohibida estancia" [whose hospitality changed at the thresholds of his apparent ascetic selfishness. Not even an echo of the outside noise…was able to trespass the thickness of the blocks of stone and move a breeze of air in the forbidden room] (42). Prospero recounts to his students that in this space the king dreamed and freed himself from the actual legendary king, turning his vision inward and submerging himself in a profound meditation. He says:

[139] See Rodó, *Ariel*, 39.

> […] Y luego, cuando la muerte vino a recordarle que él no había sido sino un huésped más en su palacio, la impenetrable estancia quedó clausurada y muda para siempre; para siempre abismada en su reposo infinito; nadie la profanó jamás, porque nadie hubiera osado poner la planta irreverente allí donde el viejo rey quiso estar solo con sus sueños y aislado en la última Tule de su alma (44).
>
> [and then, when dead came to remind him that he has only been a mere guest in his palace, the impenetrable room remained close down and mute for ever; so always astonished in the infinite repose; nobody has ever profaned it, because nobody would have dared to step in irreverently there where el old king wanted to be on his own with his dreams and isolated in the last Tule of his soul]

Therefore, the *última Thule* in *Ariel* seems to be just another element of the King's parable that functions to strengthen the secrecy and mystery that seal his private abode, which is a symbol of the inner self and the example of the soul structure that Prospero encourages for his students.

It has not been possible to find the precise source of the hospitable king's story. Nevertheless Roberto González Echevarría notes that the closest source that the he has found is Saint Teresa's *siete castillos del alma*, "[…] an elaborate inner architecture that the Spanish mystic possibly drew […] from Arabic sources"(23). In any case, he is not focused on this probable textual connection. He analyzes the parable as one element of the ideology that the

author materializes in *Ariel*. He considers that Rodó's essay mirrors the *modernista* ideology of Latin American literature at the time the essay was written. He asserts that the specific role that Prospero has, as the figure of the *maestro* and as the puppet of his master (Rodó), is crucial in understanding how the text attempts to implant a conception of culture and, consequently, a specific identity for Latin America.

The definition of culture in Rodó's essay is marked by the Latin American bourgeoisie's ideology, which Echevarría claims that it defines a "[…] conceptualization and practice of an idea of literature (8).[140] The wealthy social class in Latin America conceives literature as a way of forming up and implanting its ideology. Literature, for this social class, is an instrument in the production of an unique individual who should be capable of creating his own codes to represent the world and nature. This unique individual can recognize other like individuals with whom, sharing the same capacity to create a system of signs, are able to communicate and form a community based on a common culture. Echevarría argues that the Latin American bourgeoisie's ideology masks itself behind this belief in an universal intelligence that literature can transmit and form, in order to implant its way of being and ensure its dominant ideological position. He states that there are a series of figures in Latin American literature that crystallize this problematic of knowledge and its relation to literature. One of these figures is the *maestro*, "[…] who is the possessor and transmitter of knowledge about culture," which Prospero incarnates in *Ariel* (10).

Rodó's intention was to present *Ariel* as an answer to the American imperialism that at the end of the nineteenth century imposed its materialistic and utilitarian values on Latin

[140] Although it is not possible to depict the wealthy Latin American social class as a reproduction of the European bourgeoisie, the founding ideological pillars of the latter are the ideological principles for the Latin America bourgeoisie. See Echevarría, 8.

America. *Ariel* seems to advocate for spiritual values based on a humanistic perspective, pretending to lead the Latin American youth to the moral pleasure of self-fulfillment. However, Echevarría points out the contradiction that arises from the essay, between Prospero's humanistic values and the structure of the inner self that he promotes. The king's parable illuminates this contradiction. It does not matter how magnanimous and hospitable the king was; the fact is that he represents a figure defined by his power. But the author's ideology is not reflected in the king's character. It is the palace's structure itself, which contains an enclosed space within itself where the king's hospitality turns into ascetic egoism, which reflects an important pillar of the *modernista* ideology. In this sense, Echevarría writes: "[…] the building evokes the weight and substantiality of stone; instead of a free generous exchange, it represents a defensive posture, an exclusion. No dialogic exchange here, but rather an enclosure in which the building, like a shell, hardens into shape around a vacuum" (25).

The symbol of the soul structure that the story conveys, which is materialized in the building, represents a conception of the self that proclaims its reasoning authority by shielding itself from the outside world. The building seems to be a defensive structure that preserves the king's exclusive space for a deeper reasoning. Nevertheless, Echevarría clarifies that this structure does not place the *modernista* ideology on a defensive stand. He thinks about the parable as the rhetorical device of a more complex ideological maneuver, which Rodó carries out and that reveals his real intention. The hospitable king's story reflects the *modernista* writer's intention to proclaim a supreme authority for reasoning that is not determined by material conditions. Hence if the structure of the parable configures a bunker within the text, it should be understood as a defensive structure in which the *modernista* writer is invested with the authority to then legitimately intervene in the outside world. The defensive structure should not be

considered as a withdrawing from social dynamics, which were perceived by the *modernistas* as belligerent against intellectual activities. Rather, it is a strategic maneuver to present an individual who, standing in an autonomous position from the materialistic world, carries a truthful authority to question this world.

The king's secret abode in *Ariel* does not represent a search for a sublime space removed from political and social tensions. It is not a line of flight from the social environment. On the contrary, it is as a trench in which the writer invests his subjectivity with the authority to engage in an offensive maneuver against the environment that surrounds this private sphere. In this space converge an intellectual concern and a social class's ideology. The *modernista* writer, standing within the sphere that he has carved out in his inner world, questions the external world that he attempts to mold in his own image. He elevates his private sphere above the social environment to denounce the impoverishing of his context, which in contrast to his inner self lacks high spiritual values. As he is capable of cultivating a higher reasoning in the inner world, without being constricted by material conditions, he can put into question the outside world and lead others to pursue elevated moral and social values. The apparent *modernista* gesture of withdrawing from the social environment is the ideological answer of a wealthy social class, which uses literature to point out the coordinates towards which society should evolve and to intervene in this external sphere, arbitrarily claiming a higher source of authority invested in a private sphere shielded from the common people.[141]

Ottmar Ette draws to attention to the idea that that the king's parable configures a spatial structure within *Ariel* that is intertwined with Prospero's speech to connect the inside (the secret

[141] See Aching, for an interesting analysis of the configuration of the *reino interior* in the *modernistas'* literary production.

chamber) and the outside (the castle's hallways and galleries). He points out that the story about the hospitable king serves to express Prospero's ideas about the right evolution of the human essence. He argues that Prospero conceives the enclosed space within the palace "[…] como premisa de una verdadera libertad individual y como centro anímico de un hombre formado íntegramente […]" [as a premise of a true individual freedom and as the center of the emotions of a man entirely formed] (82). The hermetic space, forbidden for "huéspedes profanos," [profane guests] is a symbol of the soul structure that Prospero promotes for the individual's evolution, which can be expressed in the outside world as the king's generosity that opens his palace for "todas las corrientes del mundo" [all the trends of the world] (*Ariel*, 44-45). Ette also points out the connection between the parable and the ideal vision of the continent that Prospero projects. At the end of his lecture, he asks his students: "¿No la veréis, la América que nosotros soñamos; hospitalaria para las cosas del espíritu y no tan sólo para las muchedumbres que se amparen en ella[…]? [Do you not see the America that we dream about; hospitable for the spiritual matters and not only for the multitudes that enshrine in it?] (160). The continent is open to receive the multitudes and, as the king's alcazar, it also provides a hospitable space for spiritual values.

Ette proposes, in contrast to Echeverría's analysis of the king's parable, that the textual connection that the latter suggests but then too rapidly discards should be reconsidered.[142] He believes that in order to open the king's hermetic sphere and perceive its continuity with the outside space, the intertextuality between *Ariel* and the Spanish mystics' work should be explored. He points out a connection between the inner soul structure that the king's parable conveys and how Santa Teresa outlines this structure in *Moradas del castillo interior*. He asserts

[142] See Ette. Ibid, 83.

that Prospero first alludes to Spanish mystics at the beginning of his lecture, when he mentions their "versos de marfil" [ivory verses] and again when he links these stanzas to Jean-Marie Guyau's parable (13). Prospero argues that Guyau's parable compares humanity's hopes to achieve its ideal with an anxious mad bride waiting for her fiancée's arrival. The *maestro* adds that when humanity has lost the ideal for which it yearns, it is the youth's responsibility to provoke the renewal of this vision; "[…] cuya imagen, dulce y radiosa como en los versos de marfil de los místicos, basta para la animación y el contento de la vida […]" [its image, sweet and radiant as in the ivory verse of the mystics is enough to animate and please life] (13-14).

In *Moradas* by Santa Teresa the arrival of the mystic bridegroom is not subject to human will. It is not through an intellectual experience that Santa Teresa conceives that the mystic union with God can be envisioned and accomplished, but rather it is perceived by the soul and achieved in a mystical experience. Thus, Ette argues that the mystic union always remains uncertain, just as the ideal vision that Prospero projects about the continent may be never reached. Nevertheless, he claims that in spite of Santa Teresa's doubts, hiding herself behind the bride of Christ, she is confident that He will arrive. Similarly, Prospero strongly believes that his vision for the continent will be achieved. Therefore the soul structure that Prospero projects through the king's story is akin to the soul structure that Santa Teresa draws in *Moradas del castillo interior*. Both of them believe that the inner soul is the point of departure for the path to perfection, towards the union with the ideal. It is this path that allows Santa Teresa to envision the *unio mystica* with God, as it is this path that leads Prospero to project the union with his vision of Latin America's future.

The expression *última Tule* in the king's parable serves to portray an apparent unreachable dimension within the king's soul. However, as has been exposed, there are

passageways that link this secret dimension with the outside world. It is in this cryptic region of the inner soul, which in the king's story it is depicted as independent from any material constriction, where a sort of mystic union with the ideal is envisioned. But in order to achieve this ideal, this vision has to transcend the imaginary realm and be projected onto the outside world where it can be materialized. This connection between the inner soul and the outside world illustrates Prospero's thoughts about the necessity of cultivating the inner self to envision an ideal future for the continent.[143]

My contention is that Reyes radicalizes Rodó's influence in his work, as he places the *Última Tule* not as an inaccessible region of the inner soul, but rather as the literary image for the utopian vision of America. I consider that his radicalization relies on this displacement that he provokes. As he presents the *Última Tule* as the utopian vision of the continent, which is the axis around which he actually attempts to organize the Latin American intellectual elite, he removes the *modernista* contemplation of the ideal from an inner and private sphere of the self, and he places it on the outer self. The ideal vision of the continent is no longer perceived in the inner soul, but rather is a vision that could be projected through an intellectual reflection. Moreover, it should be the outcome of a collective intellectual endeavor, which should have an active and visible participation in the public arena and which, as Echevarría would argue, still reflects the pretension of an enlightened bourgeoisie to impose its conception of culture using literature.

I also believe that there is an intense esoteric characteristic in Reyes' ideal vision of the continent, which also has an exoteric facet. As will be later argued in my analyses of "El Presagio de América," it is not just coincidentally that he chooses as the title for his book the

[143] So far I have quoted the expression *última Tule* as Rodó writes it in *Ariel*. From now on, I will quote this expression as it appears in Reyes' essay "El Presagio de América": "*Última Tule*" (60).

name of a mythical Nordic land, *Ultima Thule*, which he links to a pagan source, rather than the Christian source that in *Ariel* configures the soul structure that Prospero promotes. His intention is to nourish his ideal vision of the continent with a source that could convey a transcendental energy that he believes the continent still emanates. He perceives this mystical force through poetic images of Latin America and he encourages the formation of a Latin American intellectual elite capable of apprehending this force and articulating it through its understanding of the continent. It is this energy that propels his ideal vision of the continent and, as in *Ariel*, the secret space where it is possible to perceive the ideal is reserved for only those who can cultivate a higher inner spirit, Reyes' *Última Tule* is still inhospitable for 'huéspedes profanes.'

The exoteric facet of Reyes' esoteric ideal vision is intensified, because he attempts to articulate the mysticism that the continent emanates with a visible and concrete exoteric object: the formation of a closed Latin American intellectual elite. He believes that this group of intellectuals has to apprehend the mysticism that the continent conveys. His aim is to connect this pagan source with the Latin American mind to develop an understanding of the continent that can project the ideal vision for America. In "El Presagio de América," he writes: "[…]el conocimiento habrá precedido al acto, y será la comunicación espiritual la que provoque, en su decurso, efectos políticos" [the knowledge will have preceded the action and it will be the spiritual communication that will provoke, in its becoming, political effects] (130). Thus, I understand that he believes that the communication between mysticism and secular knowledge can provoke the political events that will lead men of action to achieve the utopian vision that this communication projects.

In his essay, Reyes recreates the prophecies and the scientific hypothesis that led the Europeans to discover the new world. But this recreation is not historical research.[144] He does not seek to introduce a historical regression to recuperate the poetic visions and the scientific data that the Europeans followed to discover America. In *Norte y Sur*, Reyes writes: "[c]ada uno mira el mundo desde su ventana. La mía es la literatura" [each of us sees the world from our own window. My window is literature] (31).[145] Rafael Gutiérrez Girardot asserts that the latter confirms that Reyes' lens is the poetic word and that through this "window" he sees America (15). Reyes believes that poetic images are not created in isolation in the poet's mind or in a world of fantasy. The poet does not lose his grip on reality and enter a dream world in the creative process. On the contrary, the poetic image is anchored in reality it illuminates and revels its essence. The poetic image is a discovery that makes visible something.

In his essay, Reyes's view of the prophesies that anticipated the discovery of America is through chronicles, historical and scientific texts, and poetry, but he particularly focuses his attention on how literature lens a mystical force to the secular thought that led the European explorers to envision the new world and then to achieve this vision. His intention is to point out that it was the poetic word that first made visible the utopia of America. He argues that the new world had been sensed in poetry's dreams and in scientific glimpses before it was actually

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[144] According to Pol Popovic Reyes borrowed the title for his book from Pytheas's *Ultima Thule*. He points out that this appropriation marks "[…] the keel of [Reyes'] analytical ship in direction of historical mysticism and utopia" (130). Popovic argues the Reyes' recapitulation of major historical and cultural strands in relation to the discovery of America anchors his book in "[…]an imaginary point between two words [real and imagine] and invite the reader to use his imagination and deduction to fill the voids in the continuum of his historical narration" (130). Although I agree with him on the mysticism that characterized Reyes' work, I do not agree to with him on considering it as a historical narration. My intention is to illuminate that literature is the ""the keel of his analytical ship" that moves towards an esoteric dimension, in which he can articulate the mysticism that poetic images of the ideal of the continent convey and the Latin American intelligentsia, in order to provoke the political events that will lead to achieve the utopia for the continent.

[145] See, Reyes, "Palabras sobre la Nación Argentina".

discovered. It was said that there was a continent that disappeared at the vortex of the oceans; "[…] como la Última Tule de Séneca, de un continente por aparecer más allá de los horizontes marinos. Antes de dejarse sentir por su presencia, América se dejaba sentir por su ausencia […] América, por algún tiempo, parecía huir frente a la quilla de los fascinados exploradores" [as the Last Tule of Seneca, a continent will appear beyond the marine horizons. Before it allowed its presence to be sensed, America let itself to be perceived by its absence…America, for some time, seemed to flee in front of the keel of the fascinated explorers] (61). America had been a dream world for both poets and scientists. But it was literature that embraced the prophesies about the existence of an unknown world and communicated these strange premonitions to secular knowledge, which then guided Christopher Columbus to envision the new world at the other side of the ocean and to achieve this dreamland. Thus, the Mexican writer asserts that Renaissance poets were those who deposited these visions in Columbus' hands, "[…] cuando éste, hacia 1482, abre las páginas de *Imago Mundi*" [when he, around 1482, opened the pages of the *Imago Mundi*] (13).

Reyes points out the confluence of a certain "geographical mysticism" and scientific knowledge in the secular thought that guided the explorers to find America (17). He conjectures that in the European imagination were traces left by previous expeditions to the continent. He ponders that other seamen had arrived in America before Columbus and not only from Europe, but also through the Pacific Ocean. He asserts that the experience of Asian and Scandinavian expeditions to the continent were shaped by the Europeans, who were already in contact with these cultures, in the form of fables and legends. He argues that Mediterranean fables and European poetry collected these stories, and the mystical force that they conveyed, and then influenced the first scientific hypotheses about the existence of a new world. Therefore it seems

to be not just coincidentally that he chose as the title of his book the name of a mythical Nordic land, *Ultima Thule*, to allegorize the utopian vision of America.[146] I consider that through this expression he aims to capture the mystical force that literature infused in secular thought to envision the new world.

Reyes particularly emphasizes in this crossroads of different narratives, events and experiences, the role that literature had in permeating Western thought with a transcendental energy, which he considers was crucial to favor the transition from chimera to reality; "del presagio al hecho" [from the omen to the fact] (17). He asserts that during the Renaissance the mystical inspiration that European literature had embraced to sense the existence of a new world derived from its encounter with the humanist intellectuals. These intellectuals, who were devoted to translating Plato and Aristotle, among other classic and ancient authors, found in their works the pictures of a land that had disappeared. He argues that they were the ones who first raised questions about the earth's roundness, the antipodes and the Atlantic Ocean's navigability. But they had only gazed at a dreamland in books imbued with the mysticism that literature conveyed. The non-humanist, the entrepreneurs and the travelers, as if they were following the humanists' instructions, pursued the intellectuals' visions. He writes: "[l]a acción se había puesto al servicio de la inteligencia en el más profundo y armonioso sentido. Soñando con descubrir las bien hadadas islas utópicas, aquellos hombres iban realizando de paso una maravillosa Utopía […]" [Action was serving intelligence in the most deep and harmonious sense. Dreaming to discover the enchanted utopic island, those men were carrying out a marvelous Utopia] (29).

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[146] Sir Richard Francis Burton has noticed that *Thule* is used by Virgil poetically and rhetorically to refer to "the northern 'period of cosmographie,' and to its people real or supposed" (Intro, 1). He argues that Virgil' uses of *Thule* alludes to "the remotest part of septentrional world," either real or imagined (Introduction 1). Then, he explains, Seneca re-echoes this use in his "…celebrated 'prophetic verses,' whose sense has been extended to the New World" (Intro, 2). Moreover, he argues that there is not doubt that during the Roman Empire, "Thule was applied to Scandinavia" (23).

Reyes claims that the mystical force that literature transmitted to the Renaissance intellectuals converged in Columbus' enterprise, but that he prevented himself from revealing the mystical source that nurtured his expectations of finding a new world. If Columbus did not mention that he was searching for "[…] una tierra nueva, la Antila de las narraciones fabulosas," [a new land, the Antila from the fantastic narratives] it was because he did not want to frighten his investors and crew, or because he wanted to keep the secret (34). Reyes asserts that Columbus embodied the creative rushing of cosmic forces. This man, "[…] a half chimeric man, poet and wizard […]" found a way to overcome madness and roughness to confirm the strange premonition about the existence of a new world (46).[147]

Reyes' aim is to convene the *inteligencia americana* in order to provoke the same convergence of mysticism and secular knowledge that guided the Europeans in achieving their utopian vision of a new world. Thus, he creates poetic images that can express the mystical force that the continent emanates. Latin American intellectuals have to communicate their understanding of the continent through these images, as they embrace their mystical force. From this communication between literature and secular knowledge, guidelines for men of action can be drawn. The expression *Ultima Thule* both manifests this confluence and crystallizes an esoteric dimension in Reyes' system of thought, in which he fuses mysticism and secular knowledge. This dimension can be perceived as esoteric because exactly how the communication between Latin American knowledge and mysticism will happen remains enshrouded.

[147] Reyes particularly emphasizes the traces of Columbus' mental alienation to demonstrate how powerful the poetic images about a dream world were, that they even captured the explorer's mind, and to insist that their mystical force persists. He points out that, between Columbus' first and fourth trip, which was the last one, mysticism strengthened in his thoughts about the world that he had discovered. He argues that Columbus, even during his first trip to the Antilles, doubted if he had encountered the Garden of Eden and, in his third trip heading to the Orinoco delta, he believed that he was close to heaven. Reyes argues that in his last trip Columbus spoke as a visionary, "como un alucinado," who had entrusted himself to the pope to find the Holy Sepulcher and who thought that he was leading a divine mission (44).

Furthermore, what remains hidden is who the intellectuals are who will be able to perform this spiritual communication. It remains a mystery how this encounter between mysticism and knowledge will guide men of action to create a cultural and political re-foundation of Latin America.

Reyes thinks that the utopian vision of the continent could be achieved through the converging of two series of propositions characterized by great disparity: mysticism and secular knowledge.[148] He creates the first series of propositions in his work through poetic images that represent the ideal visions of the continent. These poetic images manifest mysticism as a sort of spiritual truth about the continent that cannot be entirely expressed in words. The second series conveys the secular knowledge about the continent produced by Latin American thought. In the esoteric dimension of Reyes' system of thought is performed a synthesis that guarantees the conjunction of the two series and their coexistence, the meeting point that can produce political effects. Pivoting in this obscure dimension he can coordinate the two series and also regulate the communication between the two. He can connote the poetic images that express the continent's mysticism and claim what are the right denotations for those images alluding to his autochthonous Latin American knowledge. At the same time, he can point out the right path that the Latin American intelligentsia should follow to apprehend this mysticism. But in order to pursue the possibility of performing the conjunction of the two series in his present, he needs to argue that there is still a source in the continent that emanates mysticism. He needs to create a

[148] I will follow Gilles Deleuze's reflections on Lewis Carroll's work, in *Logic of Sense*, to analyze how esoteric words function between two different series. See the chapter "Seventh Series of Esoteric Words" for a further analysis on how esoteric words regulate two heterogeneous series. Although the two series that I've pointed out in Reyes' intellectual project seem to be from a different nature than those that Deleuze illuminates in Carroll's work, I am relying on his analyses of "circulating" esoteric words to reflect on how the expression *Ultima Thule* functions in Reyes' system of thought as an esoteric dimension in which the two series, mysticism and secular knowledge, are synthetized (*Logic of Sense,* 47).

connection between the idyllic vision of the pre-Hispanic past, the utopian vision that propelled the discovery of America, and the European utopias that were projected after the discovery, stretching this continuity until his present.

Thus, Reyes argues that the ideal vision of the continent "late dormido" (60). The seed of the utopia is still kept warm beneath the continent's surface and it emanates the transcendental energy that the intellectual elite has to apprehend. Reyes projects a utopian vision for America in its future, but precisely by relying on this time to come he interrogates the continent's past and present, and perceives them through his vision of an ideal order. He challenges his contemporary intellectuals with this mission: to produce the synthesis of the continent's past, present and future, as the outcome of the confluence of their understanding of the continent and the mysticism that it still emanates. It is a mission that cannot be separated from 'reality,' on the contrary, theory and practice have to remain together, and the intellectuals, half theorists and half oracles, should produce this unity guiding the men of actions.

Reyes considers this mission as a militant humanism. In this sense, Girardot writes: "[…] el humanismo misional de Reyes es también y ante todo un programa de realización histórica en América" [Reyes' humanist militancy is also, and foremost, a historical program to be realized in America] (46). Reyes conceives this program to be carried out by the Latin American intelligentsia, which must be at the top of the pyramid, guiding the development of the Latin American society. Following Reyes' program, Girardot enthusiastically argues: "[…] América puede estar dispuesta a dar al mundo del espíritu un 'golpe de Estado'. Ella reúne todos los elementos para llevar a cabo una gran revolución en el orden cultural y humano" [America can be able to provoke in the spiritual world a *coup d' etat*. It has all of the necessary elements to carry out a great revolution in the cultural and human order] (51). Girardot is not advocating for

a *coup d'état* that Latin American intellectuals should lead to assault the power of the State, rather he intends to emphasize the scope of Reyes' program. However, at the beginning of his essay, he asserts that Reyes' utopian vision is purely imaginative: "una empresa poética," [a poetic endeavor] which transcends actual reality and it is not attached to any concrete program of actions (13). Although Reyes' ideal vision for the America has to propel the continent's history, Girardot claims that Reyes leaves this mission for the following generation of intellectuals.

I also believe that Reyes leaves for a future generation of Mexican intellectuals a cartography that they should follow. Nevertheless, I would like to emphasize that his project will decisively influence the structure and dynamic that closed intellectual elites will assume to preserve and exert their role in society. The esoteric dimension of Reyes' system of thought will be materialized in the structure of these closed communities—at both the level of their structure of thought and the level of the actual structure of their communities.

Deleuze explains that every structure is composed by at least two heterogeneous series: "one signifying and the other signified" (48). The first conveys a natural excess of signifying series and the latter a lack of signified series. There is a signifying series with floating signifiers that the signified series attempts to grasp. The relationship between the two series is in eternal disequilibrium and displacement due to the signifying series' excess and the signified series' lack. The first expresses a primordial signifier that is of the order of language and that is all given at once. The signified is of the order of the known that proceeds in a progressive manner, from one point to the other, to develop an understanding of the signifier. But this knowledge cannot apprehend the signifier's totality. There is always a gap lying between the two series. Thus, the floating signifier could drift diverging from thought and it could be a promise for "all art, all mythic, and all aesthetic invention" (49). Deleuze adds that this gap also makes

revolutions possible, because apprehending this empty space they seek to liberate the signifier from a form of thought that claims the authority to define it.

Reyes' narrative tends to close the gap lying between the two series. He perceives hidden signifiers that the continent emanates, and, as he captures these floating signifiers, he codifies them into a signified series to define the order that he believes should be imposed on the continent by a closed intellectual elite. The actual structure of the following generation of closed intellectual elites in Mexico will embody Reyes' model. Thus, it may interesting to consider whether political struggles in Mexico, such as the students' movement that converged on the tragic night of Tlatelolco, was an attempt to liberate floating signifiers from the closed intellectual elite's appropriation of them, an appropriation that defines the order that Reyes believes must be imposed in Mexican society.

4

Octavio Paz:

The Remnants of the Poets' Brotherhood

Introduction

On August-September 1990, the journal *Vuelta*, which Octavio Paz founded in 1976, organized a series of conferences in Mexico City. Included among the participants were some of the most relevant contemporary intellectuals; Agnes Heller, Cornelius Castoriadis, Mario Vargas Llosa, and Carlos Monsiváis. The conference, titled "La experiencia de la libertad" [The experience of freedom] was intended to address the recent collapse of the Soviet Union. The organizers aimed to debate whether socialist and Marxist theoretical perspectives were still viable to conceive and project political experiences that could then achieve collective emancipation. Two weeks before the conferences took place, Paz and his literary circle have dinner with Vaclav Havel, the former president of Czechoslovakia, who was also a poet and essayist. During this dinner, Havel proposed a toast: "[por] esa mafia que somos los escritores" [for the mafia that we, all writers, are]. All the writers loudly laughed. Octavio Paz, however, does not. He pauses to regain his composure, and then intervenes in the conversation to clarify

that, as he conceives poetry and literature, writers constitute a mafia, but only in the sense of a brotherhood.[149]

Perhaps Havel did not know that his words would strike Paz in a very particular way. The intellectual elite that he commanded had been precisely identified as a sort of mafia group operating within the Mexican cultural milieu. Paz rapidly attempted to mitigate the negative connotation of the idea of mafia as it was used to define a community of writers, because he is well aware that this notion has been often, since the 1950s, used to define specific groups of intellectuals in Mexico. These restricted communities, based on selective affinities, a strong sense of loyalty to the group and a rigid hierarchical structure, had developed practices of exclusivity and participation that corresponded to the mafia style. Thus it is interesting to highlight Paz' urgency to redefine the term "mafia" to mean a brotherhood. It is also interesting to consider that the members of a mafia group neither identify other partners in crime as mob members nor consider their organization a mafia. They call their peers "*amici*" [friends] and the closed group "*l'onorota societá*" [the honorable society].[150]

Writers and intellectuals who have been excluded by these closed groups that control the Mexican intellectual milieu are not the only ones who have used the term mafia to define restricted communities of intellectuals. Members of the so-called mafia have also appropriated the expression to allude to their own organization. In this manner, they have encouraged a mythology for their group that fosters an image of its omnipotent power and strength, and

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[149] See Ledesma, *El Pensamiento Político de Octavio Paz: Las Trampas de La Ideología*, 107. Paz says about that dinner and Havel's comment: "La palabra *mafia* me pareció muy simpática en sus labios. La palabra *mafia* tiene distintas acepciones. La mafia es una coalición de intereses. Pero la *mafia* es también una organización fuera del orden y fuera del dinero, ¡En ese sentido yo estoy con la *mafia*!" [The word mafia seemed funny on his lips. The word mafia has different meanings. The mafia is a collection of different interests. But the mafia is also an outlaw organization and is outside the money circulation. In this sense I am with the mafia!]. See Marta Anaya, "Vaclav Havel," (Excélsior, August 16 1990, p. 1-26).
[150] See Piazza, *La Mafia*, 89.

enshrouds in obscurity the group's network. It was actually a member of one of these groups who immortalized this term in defining his organization. In his psychedelic novel *La Mafia* (1967), Luis Guillermo Piazza celebrates the hegemonic power of the group in which he participates. The novel illuminates an obscure system of alliances that structures the cultural environment. The novel contains autobiographic references, pictures of the group's gatherings, cultural and intellectual events, and happenings that they organize. Piazza also transcribes his dialogues with other members of the mafia, such as Fernando Benítez, Carlos Monsiváis, and Carlos Fuentes. These dialogues depict the hierarchical structure and dynamic of the organization.

La Mafia epitomizes how a closed group of intellectuals operates and imposes its hegemony. It reflects a network of power and trafficking of influences that control publishing houses, journals, literary awards and scholarships. The novel shows how certain writers aligned with the group's interests are promoted and others, who do not respond to the group, or that represent a potential menace to the organization's hegemony, are obliterated by hard criticisms or simply left in oblivion, with no opportunity to publish their work. In 1967, when Piazza publishes his book, he kicks the cultural hornet's nest and provokes different reactions. But surprisingly his novel was not under the attack of other members of his group, who, one may think could have felt betrayed by his revelations. They think of the novel as a ludic provocation, and other intellectuals who are opposed to the mafia believe that it is another example of the group's impunity.

The mafia lead by Benítez and Fuentes succeeds in imposing its hegemony during the 1960s, building the cultural and intellectual hierarchies that control the centers of power that regulate the cultural scenario. The first section of the present chapter focuses on the formation

process of this group, and on the tactics and strategies that the groups deploy to impose their hegemony, to map the functioning and dynamics of intellectual elites in the Mexican cultural milieu. This analysis will shed light behind the scene of the cultural and literary history, a history which deeply affects the process of literary canonization and irremediably marks new generations of writers, literary critics and scholars. In this section, I will also address Paz's initial alliance with the mafia. While he is in Mexico and then from abroad as a professor at universities in the United States or as a member of the diplomatic body, he helps to shape the cultural milieu. His work is a decisive influence in the formation of a new intellectual and literary discourse, which becomes hegemonic once that he finally returns to Mexico in 1971. His return also marks the rupture with the mafia, as he then decides to form his own closed cadre of intellectuals.

In the second section, "La conjura de los letrados," I will address Paz's quarrel, in the 1990s, with the journal *Nexos* and the group of intellectuals around it, in order to analyze his position as a public intellectual facing, as Paz defines them, organic intellectuals. I will examine his arguments against *Nexos* to point out his own understanding about what should be the role of intellectuals and the scope of their interventions in society at large. I will address how Paz analyzes the work of Mexican intellectuals who have assumed the function that he thinks intellectuals should have: to develop and provide critical perspectives on the different forms of power. Paz believes that artists and intellectual should intervene in their historical context, but that they should not have an ideological or political program that determines their cultural and intellectual productions. Such ideological or political programs, according to Paz, would circumscribe their work to a specific historical context, which would consequently throttle the possibility of developing sharp critical thought. I will also analyze how Paz considers that artists and intellectuals can transcend their historical context and at the same time can participate in the

social collective life. Through Jorge Aguilar Mora's work, I will start to examine how Paz favors myth over history, and what are the consequences of this approach to history for the formation of new generation of intellectuals in Mexico.

In the third section, "Apollo's soldiers: the remnants of the poet's brotherhood," I will go further in my analysis of Paz's conception of the role and function of artists and intellectuals in society at large, more specifically focusing on how he understands the position that poets should have. I will first address Paz's study of the formation, becoming and decline of the poets' brotherhood. I will examine the first edition of his book, *El Arco y la Lira* (1956), to analyze how Paz thinks about poetry and the poetic experience, and about the nature of the poets' interventions to subvert social structures. I will then analyze specific threads within the genealogy of knowledge that he introduces in his work to identify tactics and strategies of power intended to reposition the role of poets in modern societies. I will also situate the source that Paz uses to define poetry as a superior form of knowledge. Tracing the displacement of Paz's thought from a philosophical discourse and understanding, which he recuperates through Heraclitus' and Hegel' philosophy, toward a literary language and poetic knowledge, I will illuminate conceptual pillars that sustain this transition. This analysis will provide a new understanding of his approaches to the myths, which he considers as crucial archetypes to develop a critical view of society.

In the last section, "Sacrifice and the origin of the community," I will articulate the changes that he introduces in the second edition of *El Arco y la Lira* (1967), and the new prologue that he includes for it, "Los signos en rotación," to analyze Paz's progression toward a more conservative position. Paz reduces the subversive power that he had granted to poetry. Nevertheless, I will argue that for Paz poetry does not cease to provide a critical understanding

and a superior form of knowledge to situate men in their present and project an alternative for their future. I will analyze how the distinctive elements that Paz attributes to poetry and literary language converge in his essay "Crítica de la pirámide," as he confronts the historical horror of the Tlatelolco massacre. My attention will particularly focus on his ideas about the cyclical recurrence of the sacrificial ritual in Mexican society and on how the old mythology that has founded the community nourishes the bureaucratic political regime. I will also analyze his approach to this mythical dimension through his poem "Mariposa de obsidiana" (1951), to examine his attempt to disrupt this violent cycle of sacrificial rituals. Finally I will address Paz' actual positioning in the intellectual milieu and his political engagement, as I articulate the concepts that he elaborates in his intellectual production, to analyze the implication of his positioning and the nature of the political regimes that he supports.

My research on Paz's work mainly focuses on his literary and intellectual productions from the 1950s and 1960s, because I have found that this period of his work is the most fertile for problematizing key concepts of his system of thought regarding his conceptions of poetry, the poetic experience, and the positioning of artists and intellectuals in the society at large. On the one hand, he is still elaborating his definitive rupture with the left orthodox intellectuals, while simultaneously attempting to develop a theory about poetry and the poetic experience that can support the idea that from this disengaged position he can provide a more radical critique than the so-called engaged intellectuals. On the other hand, during this period Paz is still in the process of consolidating his more conservative position. I will examine the conceptual elaborations that guide him toward this position. I believe that it is possible to not only trace during this period a chorological progression of fundamental concepts of his system of thought,

but, more importantly, to see Paz's thought in motion before it becomes more petrified in his reactionary position.

I. "La Mafia."

> ***Mafia:*** *término que en Italia o USA implica cierta asociación de índole más bien criminal, y que en México, por extraño símil, se aplica preferentemente a un supuesto confuso difuso misterioso grupo de reguidores de la cultura, al que todos atacan y al que todos ansiarían pertencer.*
>
> [Mafia: term that in Italy or the U.S.A. implies certain criminal association and that in Mexico, as an estrange simile, is applied preferably to a confused, diffused, mysterious group of cultural rulers, which everyone attacks but also to which everyone wants to belong].
>
> Guillermo Piaza. *La Mafia*.[151]

The struggle for power and hegemony has been axial in the formation of closed intellectual elites in the Mexican cultural milieu. The same antagonism, which during the 1930s

[151] Bold and italic included in the original text.

structures the literary and cultural realm, between groups of intellectuals that favor a nationalist cultural project against those groups that encourage a universalist project, still marks profound divisions among intellectual elites until the late 1960s. The group that gathers together around the cultural and literary supplement of the journal *Siempre!*, "La Cultura en México," among them Fernando Benítez, Carlos Fuentes, and Emmanuel Carballo, which has come to be known as the mafia, embraces the universalist position. In order to carry out their cultural project, this closed community of intellectuals configures a tight network to gain more power and impose its hegemony in the cultural milieu.

The dominant position of this tightly knit group of internationalizing intellectuals finally prevailed over the nationalists. Deborah Cohn argues that they "dominate the cultural production through their monopoly of popular and elite media, seeking to legitimate a cosmopolitan definition of the Mexican culture" (142).[152] As they control cultural and literary journals, as well as publishing houses, they create a system of inclusion and exclusion that draws the borders between those who are "in" and those who are "out." Cohn asserts that this closed intellectual elite holds the authority as an "arbiter of cultural legitimacy with the power to determine the course of the [cultural] debate" (144).

The internationalizing position, which represents an important faction of the Mexican intelligentsia since the 1940s, has been disseminated through the control of higher education institutions. As has been developed in the previous chapter, Reyes' figure is central in the expansion of this position, which seeks to build solid bridges between the national and the universal culture. The new generation of intellectuals sets aside Reyes' utopic dream for the

[152] See Cohn, "The Mexican Intelligentsia, 1950-1968: Cosmopolitanism, National Identity, and the State."

continent and advocates a Mexican way towards socialism. Theirs is a political and cultural project that distances itself from the orthodox left and aims for innovations in the field of aesthetic and ideas. The mafia thus imposes its hegemony and determines the pulse of the Mexican culture.[153]

A crucial event that seals the pact among the mafia's members takes place when Benítez and Fuentes break off from the journal "Política," for which they have been collaborating, and other intellectuals decide to follow them.[154] In this journal, which was founded in 1960, converge the most prominent Mexican left intellectuals under a clear editorial line. They defend the Cuban Revolution against the imperialism of the United States and criticize the Mexican political system. However, the ideological cohesion of the group is hard to sustain. Internal divisions emerge when Benítez and Fuentes' faction supports the "Movimiento de Liberación Nacional," which is founded by the former president Lázaro Cárdenas. Heading to the presidential elections in 1964, the group around the journal fractures between those who endorse Cárdenas's candidacy and those who reject it relying on an orthodox Marxist position, which does not legitimize the Mexican political system. Benítez and Fuentes believe that Cárdenas will go deeper in a social integration process and will strengthen an alliance between the Mexican state and the people.[155]

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[153] The members of the mafia belongs to the generation of internationalizing intellectuals, which, led by Benítez, Jaime García Terrés, Fuentes and Paz, is also known as the "generación de Medio Siglo" or the "generación de la Casa del Lago". They usually collaborate with the journal "Medio Siglo," and participate in the cultural activities, seminars and conferences that are held at the "Casa del Lago." This is a cultural center inaugurated in 1959 under the auspices of the Dirección de Difusión Cultural, which belongs to the Universidad Autónoma de México. Among other writers who belong to this generation are: Juan García Ponce, Sergio Pitol and Salvador Elizondo.

[154] Another crucial antecedent with which to analyze the mafia's original formation is the participation of its members in the journal, "Revista Mexciana de Literatura" (1955-1965). Fuentes and Carballo founded this journal in 1955 under the patronage of Alfonso Reyes. The journal expressed the cosmopolitan values and the literary experimentation that this faction of the Mexican intelligentsia pretends to impose on the Mexican cultural milieu.

[155] See López, *Una Inquietud de Amanecer: Literatura y Política en México, 1962-1987,* 78.

This disagreement is one key to understanding the struggle for power and hegemony among different intellectual elites in Mexico. Xavier Rodriguez Ledesma explains that the relationship that each of these groups of intellectuals have with the state has determined their historical positioning.[156] In Mexico, the different administrations recognize certain groups of intellectuals as their interlocutors. The state provides to these intellectuals financial support for their cultural institutions and grants them scholarships. Politicians believe that through their dialogue with intellectuals they can gauge the effects of their policies and how these measures impact the societal body. Ledesma asserts that intellectuals play the role of the state's conscience. Although more often than not their opinions are not attended, they still represent a figure invested with the authority to judge and evaluate political power.

Benítez' and Fuentes' rupture with the orthodox left opens a new position in the cultural environment. This new positioning also determines the strategy that they will follow to gain more power in their relation with the state's apparatus. They form a closed elite of intellectuals that emulates the mafia model, which tends to subordinate ideological principles under the interests of the closed organization. The actual tactics and strategies of power that this group deploys, as will be addressed, are not necessary circumscribed to the members' social class conditions and ideology. Thus it is crucial to analyze their intellectual production, the formation of both literary and non-literary discourse, in terms of tactics and strategies of power, and not only as reflecting a social class ideology.

[156] See Ledesma, *El Pensamiento Político de Octavio Paz: Las trampas de la ideología*, 10.

After the rupture with *Polítical*, the mafia's members converge in the cultural supplement of the journal *Siempre!*, "La Cultura en México."[157] This is the platform on which Benítez stands to strengthen the position of his group. He becomes a master of obtaining financial support from the state, and he orchestrates the resources of his network to promote his work, and the intellectual production of the members of his group.[158] López writes: "Así acumuló autoridad y poder para formar directa o indirectamente generaciones de cuadros que multiplicarían y reproducirían los criterios y formas críticas de su grupo para crear, juzgar y valorar el arte y la cultura; y por esa vía influyó en la percpeción estétia de los sectores letrados del país" [In this manner, he gained the authority and the power to form directly or indirectly generations of cadres [of intellectuals] that will multiply and reproduce the criteria and the critical forms of his group to create, judge and evaluate art and culture; and in this way he influenced the aesthetic perception of lettered sectors of the country] (83). Fuentes also uses the supplement to launch his virulent attacks on the previous generation of writers, while others members constantly promote his work, publishing articles in the journal claiming that his literary production embodies the new Mexican narrative. His harsh criticism clearly fosters the group's attempt to fight for a hegemonic position in the cultural milieu and represents a collective strategic maneuvering to displace other dominant groups.[159]

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[157] In 1962, Benítez founded this supplement with a group of intellectuals who accompanied him after he left, in 1961, the cultural supplement of the newspaper *Novedades*, "México en la Cultura" (1949-1961). Benítez's strong support of the Cuban and Chinese Revolutions was at odds with the newspaper's editorial line. Hence he was finally fired. He then congregates around "México en la Cultura the promise of the new generation of intellectuals, among them: Rosario Castellanos, Fuentes, Carballo, Monsiváis, José Emilio Pacheco, and Elena Poniatowska.

[158] Benítez arrives to *Siempre!* through the intervention of president Adolfo López Mateos (1958-1964), who offers also him financial support. He maintains a good relationship with the administration until the assassination of Rubén Jaramillo, in May 23rd 1962, who was a social leader of the Mexican farmers. The supplement publishes an interview about this murder and consequently the State cancel the subsidization of "La Cultura en México."

[159] See López. Ibid, 87.

The mafia's power and hegemony consolidates during the 1960s. "La Cultura en México" proposes an attractive alternative perspective for a young generation of readers and left intellectuals. It reaffirms certain autonomy from the political power and develops a critical view of national politics. It also defends anti-imperialism and anti-capitalist positions all around the world. It follows and reflects the contemporary debates in political theory and philosophy, as well as the new trends in the literary world. The group closes its ranks and strengthens its *esprit de corps*. Cohn writes: "[h]ere, then, they reinforced the connections that bound them together over the years, concentrating power in the hands of a small cultural elite" (165). They promote their individual work and only publish or support the production of other intellectuals who may be interesting allies in the project of increasing the groups' dominant position.[160]

Jorge Volpi, a member of the contemporary generation of Mexican writers, who has been formed by the mafia and has been strongly endorsed by Fuentes, provides a particular perspective on the group. His perspective tends to downplay the obscure mythology that envelops the mafia.[161] He claims that the group, as any intellectual group with prominent members, has some power. However, he asserts that they did not despotically exert its hegemony. He writes: "[…] nunca se trató de una sociedad todopoderosa capaz de controlar toda la vida cultural mexicana, como afirmaban sus detractores" [it was never about an omnipotent society capable of controlling the Mexican cultural life, as its detractors claimed] (53). He argues

[160] Emmanuel Carballo, a member of the group clearly understands and plays with the commercial rules of the cultural market to further develop the mafia's network and trafficking of influence. He is a literary critic and agent of publishing houses, who has exerted his influence to promote authors aligned with his group. Through his vast network he strengthens the group's positioning or blocks other lines of thoughts that do not coincide with his group. His connections with publishing houses and with other public cultural institutions, allows him to create the publishing house *Diógenes*, while he also works for the publishing house *Empresas Editoriales* and has closed ties with the publishing house *Era*.

[161] It is interesting to note that Volpi's book, *La Imaginación y el Poder*, in which he analyzes the group, is published by the *Era* publishing house. Carballo, a prominent member of the group had strong connections with this publishing house.

that probably Luis Spota coined the notion of mafia to define the group, because he was Italian and a declared enemy of the group. In order to undermine the notion of mafia as defining the group, he quotes Carlos Monsiváis: "[l]a mafia [es] una abstracción que designa a una élite inaccesible de escritores y pintores. La mafia preocupa, molesta, irrita, desconcierta, indigna. La mafia –dicen– quiere impedir el acceso a la cultura de los valores jóvenes. La mafia no existe" [The mafia is an abstraction of reality that designates a hermetic elite of writers and painters. The mafia worries, bothers, irritates, troubles, and angers [the people]. The mafia—they say—wants to prevent the access of young intellectuals to the cultural sphere. The mafia does not exist] (82).[162] Volpi's and Monsiváis' arguments seem to swing from irony to sarcasm in an attempt to deny the existence of a mafia group.

Volpi believes that Piazza's novel, *La Mafia*, does not illuminate an obscure theater of operation, in which the group orchestrates its interventions to gain a hegemonic position in the cultural milieu. However, he admits that it is impossible to deny that the group is a closed and small elite of intellectuals that occupy some of the most important spaces in the cultural environment. He concludes that Piazza's novel gets a lot of attention only because it echoes a national imaginary, which is always looking for conspiracies and the power of a secret group that from the shadows controls everything. He acknowledges that the group functions as a tightly knit group, but he insists that it does not control every aspect of the Mexican culture.

There are two main sources that legitimate the mafia's power. One is the political corporation, which favors the foundation and consolidation of the group.[163] Nevertheless, the

[162] See Monsiváis, *Días de Guardar*, 82.
[163] As has been mentioned before, in 1961, president López Mateos offers Benítez financial support to restart "México en la Cultura". Then President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz's administration exerts a strong pressure to censure the journal "Política," after Benítez' and Fuentes' resignation, and the journal's

relationship between the mafia and the Mexican state varies as the group's agenda encompasses the different social and political events in the national and international contexts. The breaking point of its relationship with the power of the State is the Tlatelolco massacre, on October 1968, during Gustavo Díaz Ordaz's presidency (1964-1970). For the group this tragic event also marks the last gasp of the nationalist intellectuals' position, which had supported Ordaz's government. Nevertheless, after a violent repression of a students' protest in 1972, Fuentes endorses president Luis Echeverría.[164] This ambivalent position demonstrates that the intellectuals' ideology seems to be accommodated to the strategic position that they are looking to occupy, which in spite of the variable tension with the power of the state it is still closely link to the state's institutions.

The other crucial source of support for the mafia's dominant position is the international recognition that the group of writers known as the *Boom* achieves (among them Mario Vargas Llosa, Fuentes, Julio Cortázar and Gabriel García Márquez). The internationalizing discourse that characterizes the journal converges with these new Latin American literary narratives. Thus the perception, that belonging to the mafia or being appreciated by the group means achieving a genuine recognition in the Mexican cultural scenario, and potentially beyond the national context, is strengthened. The mafia's members often invoke this international recognition to justify their dominant position. They argue that those writers and intellectuals who have failed or are still trying to be recognized, promote the notion of mafia only to stigmatize the group.

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editorial line radicalizes its criticism on the regime. Finally, in 1967, the Mexican State refuses to keep selling paper to the journal and it is forced to close. The State controls the monopoly of the production of paper in Mexico, which is expensive due to the lack of natural resources to produce it locally. Hence the State, subsidizing the paper and fixing a price for it, decides who are the media and intellectual groups that can have access to this essential material. See Cohn, Ibid, 174.

[164] Fuentes argues that the stability of the entire nation is at stake, facing the possibility of a more violent reaction from the national right. Thus he claims that it is necessary to defend the regime, which aims to mitigate the radicalization of the students' movement.

Octavio Paz's affinity and collaborations with the group grant him the support of the organization. This alliance with the mafia's members propitiates a favorable context for him when he finally returns to Mexico in 1971. Paz had been a peripheral writer and had reminded outside of the most public and visible cenacles of intellectuals, until he finally irrupts at the center of the cultural scenario in 1967, when he is appointed as a member of *El Colegio Nacional*, one of the most prestigious cultural institutions in Mexico. Paz met Fuentes in 1953 and despite their ideological differences an intellectual kinship was forged between Paz and Fuentes' group.[165] The mafia strongly promotes his appointment at *El Colegio Nacional*, because it perceives that Paz's designation marks a triumph over the older generation of intellectuals (among them, Antonio Castro Leal, Jaime Torres Bodet and Agustín Yáñez), which had ignored Paz's work, and controlled public institutions. This previous generation of intellectuals defended a nationalist position that neglected the work of the new generation of intellectuals who were deeply influenced by the international context of ideas and new trends in the literary world.

La mafia's members appreciate Paz's work as an example of universalism and cosmopolitism that should guide the new generation of writers and intellectuals. In "La Cultura en México," regarding Paz's designation at *El Colegio*, is published an editorial note that says: "[e]l ingreso de Octavio Paz al Colegio Nacional no añade nada a su gloria, pero al menos es una *revancha* diferida del 'ninguneo' que trató de envolverlo con su nada durante muchos años" [Octavio Paz's appointment at the Colegio Nacional does not add anything to his glory, but at

[165] In 1937, Paz travels to Spain with a group of Mexican writers to participate in the *Segundo Congreso Internacional de Escritores en Defensa de la Cultura*. He profoundly embraces the Republican cause in Spain. However after he bears witness to the internal struggle within the left front in Spain, between socialists and anarchists, and knows that the Stalinist regime is conducting a purge of intellectuals in Moscow, his disenchantment with Marxism grows deeper. Paz's definite and inexorable rupture with the Soviet experience occurs after the German-Soviet Pact of non-aggression, and the assassination of Leon Trotsky in Mexico.

least it is a differed revenge against the 'ninguneo' that aimed to wrap him with its nothingness along many years].[166] Paz had expressed his appreciation for the cultural supplement before his designation and, in a dialogue with Monsiváis, expresses his support of the students' movements, which at that time are at the center of the political scenario. He also had praised the defiant attitude of the new generation of writers and said that intellectuals such as Monsiváis, Benítez and Piazza, have revitalized the Mexican cultural milieu.[167] The mafia reciprocates Paz's endorsement of their political positions and cultural program. Monsiváis even writes that Paz's work represents a rupture in the cultural world, an alternative to the cultural establishment.[168]

Paz' alliance with the mafia group reflects a strategic positioning in the struggle for cultural hegemony. The group advocates for a renovation in the field of aesthetic and ideas. Paz' work embodies this program and functions as a spearhead that lances the older generation of intellectuals. This strategy, rather than rejecting the intellectual establishment, aims to erode the nationalists' cultural position, which had controlled cultural institutions, in order to displace them from the centers of power that regulate the cultural milieu. The alliance between Paz and the mafia also reveals that ideological differences are not prominent in the struggle for cultural hegemony. One month before "La Cultura en México" celebrates Paz's appointment at *El Colegio*, the supplement published an issue to commemorate the Bolshevist Revolution: "La Unión Soviética a cincuenta años de la Revolución de Octubre." [169] This is striking considering that at that time Paz has already developed a strong criticism against the soviet experience of

[166] See "La Cultura en México," (16-VIII-1976: II).
[167] See López, Ibid, 101.
[168] Monsiváis also claims that Paz' intellectual production provokes a subversion of the intellectual *status quo* through his innovations in literary aesthetic, which rejects nationalism and literary traditions. See "La Cultura en México," (16-VIII-1967: IV).
[169] See "La Cultura en México" (15-VIII-1967).

communism, which he believes represents a deviation from the original emancipatory political project that propelled the revolution, and which has for him become a totalitarian regime.

Nevertheless it is not surprising that the ideological differences strongly emerge between Paz and the mafia's members once Paz returns to Mexico and after he decides to form his own community of intellectuals to struggle for cultural hegemony instead of collaborating with Fuentes in a literary journal. His recognition and influence grow remarkably in the intellectual environment. Thus Julio Scherer, the editor of the newspaper *Excélsior*, offers him a position at the head of the editorial board's of a new cultural and literary journal. He accepts this position and founds *Plural*, which becomes one of the most influential literary and cultural journals in Mexico.[170] Nevertheless, the critical spirit that Scherer's editorial line professes is not well tolerated by the Echeverría administration. In 1976 Scherer is forced to leave the *Excélsior*, which is the most important newspaper at that time. Paz, expressing his solidarity, also leaves the newspaper and in December of the same year, he founds with the same group of intellectuals the journal *Vuelta* (1976-1998).

After founding *Vuelta*, Paz engages in a bitter dispute with the editorial board of *Plural*, pointing out that the journal should have changed its name, since it no longer represents a plural spirit. He claims that this shift is reflected in the journal's support of the Cuban regime. Another fundamental struggle that divides the waters and certainly establishes two clear political positions in the cultural world develops between Paz and Monsiváis. They clash due to their antagonistic ideological positions regarding socialism, Marxism and the Mexican political

[170] See King, *The Role of Mexico's Plural in Latin American Literary and Political Culture: From Tlatelolco to the "philanthropic Ogre,"* for an exhaustive analysis of the role and position that Paz's journal had during the 1970s.

system, and about the role that they consider intellectuals should have in society at large.[171] These struggles, sometimes reflecting ideological positions, and other times personal interests and egos, have structured the Mexican cultural milieu and have divided the different factions struggling for more power and recognition. New generations of intellectuals and writers tend to assume positions behind the leading figures that control the cultural and literary journals, and the publishing houses. These "caciques de la cultural" sometimes have developed brilliant intellectual projects that support their authority and position. Nonetheless, they have adopted similar tactics and strategies to impose their hegemony, which as will be analyzed in Paz's specific case, affect and reflect the formation of his literary and non-literary discourse.

II. "La Conjura de los letrados"

> La lucha dentro de los valores establecidos tiene una figura histórica que es el ciclo ineluctable de los grupos que se apropian del discurso dominante.
> [The struggle inside the established values has a historical figure that is the ineluctable cycle of the groups that take over the dominant discourse].
> Aguilar Mora. *La Divina Pareja. Historia y Mito en Octavio Paz*.

[171] For an interesting analysis of the quarrel between Paz and Monsiváis, see Ledesma, "La polémica Octavio Paz-Carlos Monsiváis (Diciembre de 1977-Enero de 1978)," in *El Pensamiento Político de Octavio Paz: Las Trampas de La Ideología*. In the conclusion of the present chapter I will address Paz's political ideology and the implications of this position in the cultural milieu.

Two years after *Vuelta* held in 1990 the series of colloquiums, "La experiencia de la libertad," the journal *Nexos* organizes the conferences "Coloquio de Invierno."[172] Octavio Paz then publishes in *Vuelta* the article "La Conjura de los letrados," in which he develops a virulent attack on *Nexos* and on the event that the group of intellectuals around this journal, at that time led by Héctor Aguilar Camín, had organized.[173] He claims that "Coloquio de Invierno" addressed the same themes that were already debated in "La experiencia de la libertad." He also complains that the public media's coverage and the support granted by public institutions, such as: the *Universidad Autónoma de México* (UNAM) and the *Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes*, were disproportionate considering the lack of attention, support and publicity that the conferenced organized by *Vuelta* had suffered. He does not point out ideological differences with the organizers. Nonetheless he claims that there is a moral issue at stake. He recognizes himself as a member of another minority of intellectuals, which have always gone against the grain of main intellectual trends. He asserts that he fights a crusade for justice, truth, and loyalty to his ideas, a struggle against aesthetic and moral aberrations, such as a nationalist ideology, the socialist realism and, as he says it, the nebulous politically so called engaged literature.

Paz is convinced that the lack of public attention and intellectual indifference to his work, which was only finally publically recognized when he was appointed at *El Colegio Nacional* in 1967, also have affected the group of intellectuals that gather around his journal. He thinks that his group represents "uno de los obstáculos –no el único ni el principal– de una vasta maniobra para apoderarse de los centros vitales e institucionales de la cultura mexicana" [one of the

[172] Enrique Florescano founded *Nexos* in 1978. Carlos Fuentes, Pablo González Casanova, Héctor Aguilar Camín, Rolando Cordera, Jorge Castañeda, among others organized and participated in "Coloquio de Invierno."
[173] See *Vuelta*, 9-14 (185, April, 1992).

obstacles—neither the only one nor the primordial—of a vast machination to take over of the vital center and institutions of the Mexican culture] (9). He claims that the *Nexos* group participates in this obscure machination. For this reason, the intellectuals collaborating with him had not been invited to participate in "Coloquio de Invierno." He claims that he unveils the action behind the scene of these conferences, because "me retiene una causa, soy parte de una fraternidad" [a cause holds me back: I am a member of brotherhood] (10). He points out that the community of intellectuals around *Vuelta*, and other independent artists and intellectuals, are members of this brotherhood, which is founded on the shared convictions that favor freedom of thinking and the autonomy of the cultural realm.

Nevertheless Paz clarifies that his harsh criticism does not stem from the exclusion of the members of his brotherhood from the conferences.[174] He specifically criticizes the support that public institutions granted to *Nexos*'s group, because he considers that the state should not intervene in the struggles between intellectual elites. He emphasizes that the most negative aspect of the alliance between the state's institutions and *Nexos*, is that it had been forged in secret and only disclosed to the public once the conference's purpose and the intellectuals who were going to be invited had been already decided. He writes about the participants in "Coloquio de Invierno:" "[h]abía, sí, distintas variedades y matices, como hay distintas órdenes religiosas en el catolicismo y sectas diferentes en el protestantismo. Asimismo, los escritores e intelectuales que organizaron el *Coloquio* pertenecían sin excepción a la misma capilla" [indeed, there were

[174] Paz provides a list of intellectuals who have been excluded from the conferences. He also points out those who have only received an invitation in the last minute, which he claims was only an attempt to provide the appearance of a certain plurality of thinking. He especially points out that Catholic intellectuals have been the eternal excluded of this type of conferences, which is striking if one considers that he does not mention any of the women intellectuals who have been almost systemically excluded from the Mexican intellectual elites. The only woman writer that he mentions is the poet María Elena Cruz Varela. He argues that she has been incarcerated by Fidel Castro's regime, which was an issue that intellectuals participating at the "Coloquio" did not mention.

different varieties and nuances, as there are different religious orders in Catholicism and different sects within the Protestantism. Likewise, the writers and intellectuals that organized the Colloquium belonged without any exception to the same church] (10).[175]

Closed circles of intellectuals have marked the pulse of the Mexican cultural milieu and the intellectual history of the nation. In this sense, John King points out that when he interviewed Paz in his studio at Mexico City: "[i]t quickly became clear […] that Paz himself read the history of Mexican literature through an analysis of literary groups, literary generations, and little magazines" (3). Kings adds that Paz recalls all the factions' struggles that have structured the Mexican cultural milieu since the 1930s. He also explains that in Mexico there has not been a rich cultural Maecenas, such as Victoria Ocampo in Argentina, that grants financial support to a group of artists and intellectuals; "the main cultural Maecenas in Mexico is the state" (4). The alliance between an intellectual elite and the state has been decisive in delineating which group dominates the cultural scenario. Thus Paz targets *Nexos*' relationship with public institutions. He considers that the group seeks to gain more power and protection in order to dominate the cultural milieu.[176] Furthermore, he is convinced that *Nexos*' alliance whith the state clearly reveals that the members of the group are organic intellectuals. He considers that this affiliation subjugates intellectuals' freedom of thinking and he points out that *Nexos*' intellectuals have tempered down their more radical socialist position as consequence of this.

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[175] On May 1, 1992, *Nexos* publishes the editorial article, "Nexos y el Coloquio de Invierno/Coloquio de Primavera" that questions each point of Paz's critiques to demonstrate that his arguments are not grounded on facts and do not address the real circumstances surrounding the organization of *Coloquio de Invierno*.

[176] For instance, in an editorial note included in his article, it is anticipated that in the forthcoming issue of the journal it will be revealed that the State has granted to members of the group the control of a TV channel's content. It is also said: "[p]or lo visto, el proceso de secuestro de los centros públicos de cultura continúa y se acelara" (11).

After the Mexican Revolution intellectuals have assumed different positions within the state apparatus and worked for different government administrations. They have become public or secret advisors of men of power, and have also exerted more visible and concrete functions. They have been involved in the conception and execution of public policies and worked in the diplomatic body.[177] Paz considers that some of them have also legitimately defended the values consecrated by the Revolution. However, as they have become more concerned about jeopardizing their material conditions and modes of existence, or compromising their ideological positions, they have lost their freedom of thinking and deluded their critical thought. In this manner they have fostered among intellectuals a courtly spirit in their relationship to the state and its statesmen. In *El Laberinto de la Soeldad*, Paz writes: "[…] como ocurre siempre con toda burocracia, se ha extendido la moral cerrada de secta y el culto mágico al 'secreto de Estado'" [as it always happens with any bureaucracy, the sect's closed morality and the cult to the secret of the State have extended] (189). He does not consider that organic intellectuals are members of the intelligentsia, because he claims that they have resigned their crucial role in society, which consists in developing critical perspectives on the different forms of power.

Paz depicts the *Nexos* group as a closed military and political cadre: "[s]on osados y cautos, perseverantes y flexibles, solidarios entre ellos e indiferentes ante el extraño, capaces de sacrificar una idea para guardar una posición: disciplinados en el ataque y en la retirada, virtudes todas más militares y políticas que intelectuales" [they are courageous and cautious, they persistents and flexible, supportive among them and indifferent towards the stranger, capable of scarifying an idea in order to keep a position: disciplined in their attack and in their withdraw, all

[177] Although Paz has held different positions in the Mexican diplomatic body, for instance as the ambassador in India for six years, he has never recognized himself as an organic intellectual.

of these virtues are more military and political than intellectual] (12).[178] Nevertheless he does not criticize their strong *esprit de corps*, but rather the lack of moral and ethical principles that he believes have founded the group and propelled the plot that they carry out with the complicity of the state. As has been pointed out before, Paz recognizes that he is a member of another minority of intellectuals that form a brotherhood. He is against "[la] conjura de los letrados," because in *Nexos*' case it is a conspiracy that has been planned with the complicity of the power of the state.

In his article, Paz introduces only a negative connotation regarding the idea of "conjura." However "la conjura" [the oath] is the foundational pact of a restricted community, such as the organization in which Paz claims to participate. In this sense, it is interesting to consider his reaction when José Bianco, the managing editor of *Sur*, asked him to collaborate for the first time with the journal in 1946. Paz felt as if this invitation was a ritual of passage into an exclusive organization. He thinks that literature is like an order of chivalry.[179] Therefore, for Paz "la conjura" will also have a positive meaning as defining the engagement of the artists and intellectuals participating in the closed community. A community in which he has been initiated and in which he will then have a leading role, as one of the most relevant Latin American intellectual figures. Besides, as it will be further analyzed in the next section, Paz claims that a conspiratorial atmosphere has always surrounded the cult of poetry and he believes that "el conjuro" [the spell], as a kind of magic and secret formula, is intrinsic to the poetic act.

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[178] For an interesting analysis on the struggles between Paz's groups around the journal Vuelta and the Nexos group see, Maarten van Delden, "Conjunciones y disyunciones: La rivaldiad entre Vuelta y Nexos."

[179] Paz introduces the idea of an order of chivalry to think about the French contemporary poets that after the poetic movement Symbolism continue searching for new aesthetic forms to innovate the poetic language. He writes about them: "[e]n el centro de un pueblo razonador brotó un bosque de imágenes, una nueva orden de caballería, armada de punta en blanco con armas envenenadas. A cien años de distancia del romanticismo alemán, la poesía volvió a combatir en las mismas fronteras. Y esa rebelión fue primordialmente rebelión contra el verso francés: contra la versificación silábica y el discurso poético" (105). See In *El Arco y la Lira* in *Obras Completas*, Vol. 1

Paz believes that intellectuals should intervene in their milieu, fostering critical thought, but without having an engagement with an ideological position or subordinating themselves under the power of the state.[180] They could even transcend their social and historical context to develop their critical perspectives. In "La inteligencia Mexicana," Paz claims that a cultural or intellectual production is not necessarily determined by its historical circumstances and it does not always correspond to its historical time. He writes: "muchas veces la cultura se adelanta a la historia y la profetiza […]" [there are many times in which culture goes ahead of history and foretells it] (181).[181] The position of intellectuals is not above, ahead or beside society at large. However, as Paz insists on that, he actually participates in a brotherhood composed by artists and intellectuals, which is opposed to and fights a crusade against the sect of organic intellectuals, thus he strengthens the idea that there is an avant-garde group floating above society at large conspiring to intervene in its cultural milieu. Furthermore, as he assigns to artists and intellectuals the role of expressing and giving form to the stifled truth of the collectivity, as we shall see, he does not only transform them into objects and instruments of power in the domain of knowledge, truth, consciousness, and discourse, but also fosters the idea that artists and intellectuals belong to an exclusive minority.

Paz believes that the Mexican Revolution has exposed hidden facets of the Mexican being and challenged both artists and intellectuals to decipher this revelation, and to create forms that can express it. But, he wirtes: "el mexicano es un ser que cuando se expresa se oculta; sus palabras y gestos son casi siempre máscaras" [the Mexican is a kind of being that when it

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[180] See the conversation between Claude Fell and Paz, "Vuelta a *El Laberinto de la Soledad*," which is included in *El Ogro Filantrópico* (34).

[181] As it will be later explained, on the other hand, poetry due to its own nature always transcends history. It does not neglect history, but the poem tends to the abolition of history. Language and history nourish the poem, but the poem permanently escapes from both of them.

expresses itself [at the same time] hides itself; its words and gestures are almost as if they were masks] (191).[182] Thus artists and intellectuals face the same difficulty. They ought to interpret these words and gestures to unveil the Mexican being lying behind the masks. They have to find an organic solution to integrate the particularities of the people and their history, within a totalizing universal project that subsume these singularities, but without reducing the people to mere objects of a system of thought. Paz asserts that Mexicans for the first time in history have to invent right from the get go new ways of living together and a new understanding of their history. Nonetheless, he asserts that this synthesis has never occurred.

In "La inteligencia mexicana," Paz distinguishes intellectuals, such as José Vasconcelos and Alfonso Reyes, among others, who have offered critical thought, and envisioned cultural projects to transform their milieu. He analyzes particular nuances of these intellectuals' attitudes regarding their functions, positions and interventions in society at large. He especially examines the scope of their intellectual productions to address the social and political problems that the Mexican society has faced since the Revolution. He analyzes how they think about the origin of the Mexican community, the social pact, and the formation of the state and its institutions. He considers how they have also conceived educational and cultural programs to encompass the momentum sparked by the event of the Revolution, and conduct it toward the development of society at large. Paz evokes Reyes' presentation, "Notas sobre la inteligencia Americana." However, he does not propose, as Reyes does, a Pan-American cultural project for the Latin American intelligentsia. He does not encourage the formation of an intellectual elite that, having

[182] See Paz, "La inteligencia Mexicana," in *El Laberinto de la Soledad*.

mastered a superior form of knowledge can assume a leading role over the people to guide them to carry out a utopian collective project.[183]

Paz asserts that José Vasconcelos, "el fundador de la educación moderna en México" [the founding father of the modern education in Mexico], facing the challenges that the Revolution has posed to the Mexican intelligentsia, conceives a totalizing cultural program that radically re-appropriates the Mexicans' origin and history, and articulates them with an universal tradition (182). Based on the idea of a mythical origin of the Mexicans' blood and language, Vasconcelos aims to guide the people to overcome their narrowed nationalism and reconcile themselves with their culture and history, which has been decisively influenced by the Spaniards. He promotes a cultural and educational program that should lead the people to accomplish this cultural synthesis, which he believes that the mestizo has actually already consummated. Vasconcelos fosters the historical sense of a *raza iberoamericana,* that he believes the Mexican people embody, to encourage them to assume their role as main protagonists in the universal history, as those who will decide their own present and future conditions.[184]

Vasconcelos' work transcends his present, because he appropriates a mythological past of the Mexican people, and projects an alternative future for the community to carry out an actual intervention in his milieu. However Paz claims that this project fails because it has not been capable of articulating a political movement or founding a school of thought. Moreover, it was

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[183] Paz seems to have understood that the masses no longer need intellectuals to gain access to the source of knowledge. As Foucault argues in a dialogue with Deleuze, the masses perfectly know that they are capable of expressing themselves without the guidance and control of intellectuals. "But [Foucault says] there exists a system of power which blocks, prohibits, and invalidates this discourse and this knowledge, a power not only found in the manifest authority of censorship, but one that profoundly and subtly penetrates an entire societal network" (207). This dialogue has been published under the title "Intellectuals and Power," and included in the book edition *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews* (205-217).

[184] See Vasconcelos, *La Raza Cosmica: Misión de La Raza Iberoamericana*.

predetermined not to succeed. Paz is convinced that the mythical origin, which Vasconcelos invokes as the milestone of his project, cannot be conjured or expressed through a philosophical language. Myths only respond to our instincts and the only human inventions that can channel our instincts are artistic expressions, which can make myths burst in our present to unearth what has remained buried in the consciousness of the community. As will be further analyzed, this is a crucial distinction to note in his system of thought in order to analyze how he conceives the function, position and intervention of poets and intellectuals. Poetic language is a cognitive instrument, a method and a source of knowledge that induces a critical understanding of society at large.

The exceptionality of Reyes' intellectual production resides precisely in his poetic and literary style of writing. Paz recognizes that Reyes has been perhaps more condescending to the forms of power. Nevertheless he claims that his work offers critical perspectives on history and society at large. Paz asserts that for Reyes literature is a religion and his unique approach to literature stems from his treatment of and fidelity to language. Reyes faces language as an ethical and artistic problem. Language is the only instrument that writers have. For this reason, Reyes considers that writers should unveil the ambivalent meaning of words and, clearing them out from the layers of significances, which have been sedimented by the common used of language, make words true instruments to communicate their thought. This entails a moral and a historical critique, which is also a critique of the reality that surrounds us. Writers transcend their social and historical context, and the common use of language, to create with the same words used in this context a distinct and unique language, which exposes the unsaid truth and conflicts that constitute the community.

Paz considers that writers establish a strange and ambivalent relationship with their community at large. Language, due to its own nature, is social and created through a collective experience. However, he claims that the writer's creation is engendered in absolute solitude. But, as writers work on the same language of the people, they purify it, and their words return to be integrated into the collective life of the city. He writes: "gracias al escritor el lenguaje amorfo, horizontal, se yergue e individualiza; gracias al lenguaje, el escritor moderno, rotas las otras vías de comunicación con su pueblo y su tiempo, participa en la vida de la Ciudad" [thanks to the writer the amorphous language, horizontal, stands up straight and individualized; thanks to the language, the modern writer, having broken the other means of communication with his people and time, participates in the City's life] (195-196). Therefore, paradoxically, the writer participates in the *polis*. This is an axiomatic assumption in Paz' system of thought, because he is also convinced that solitude does not only define the creative process of writers and their living condition in society at large, but also that it is the common characteristic of all contemporary men. He writes: "[a]llí, en la soledad abierta, nos espera también la trascendencia: las manos de otros solitarios. Somos, por primera vez en nuestra historia, contempóranoes de todos los hombres" [there, in the open solitude, transcendence is also waiting for us: the hands of other solitaries. For the first time in history, we are contemporary to all men] (226). Writers create and live in solitude, but precisely for this reason they share a common experience and faith with all contemporary men.[185]

[185] In *Los Signos en Rotación*, Paz will later write: "Durante más de ciento cincuenta años el poeta se sintió aparte, en ruptura con la sociedad […] La soledad del nuevo poeta es distinta: no está solo frente a sus contemporáneos sino frente al porvenir. Y este sentimiento de incertidumbre lo comparte con todos los hombres. Su destierro es el de todos" (272). I will later address and problematize this distinction between contemporary poets and their predecessors.

Jorge Aguilar Mora has drawn attention to the contradictions in which Paz seems to be enthralled and to the actual consequences of the cultural hegemony that his dominant figure has fostered in the Mexican cultural milieu. His contention is that Paz completely hollows out the Mexican history from material conditions and deprives it of the actual people's lives. Paz fuses and overlaps specific historical circumstances of the people, their present and fate, with the history and destiny of all men. In his work, history emerges as an eternal present, as a kind of empty shell in which we are all dwelling.[186] There is a supra-historical dimension in Paz's system of thought in which writers are invested with the authority to provide a critical understanding of the community. However Paz always favors the poetic language over other forms of intellectual discourse, as the decisive cognitive instrument that can unveil what has remained hidden about the collective life and as the key to envision an alternative future for the community.

The poets radically cut their ties with society at large to create the poem in solitude, but as they carve the poem with the people's language, they are able to intervene and participate in the collective life of the city. This violent operation of appropriating people's language to purify it also has potentiality as a subversive power. Paz is convinced that the poem can undermine the structure of meaning that sustains the common language and expose not only the moral judgments lying beneath the people's thoughts, but also what has remained encrypted in the consciousness of society at large. It can invoke the myths that constitute the community and,

[186] Aguilar Mora mainly focuses his analysis on the historical progression of a couple of concepts: history and myth, in Paz's thought evolving from *El Laberinto de la Soledad* (1950), and then emerging again in *El Arco y la Lira* (1956). He claims that this progression then will not longer be possible to trace, since Paz will tend to conflates these concepts or obscure them in his intricate rhetoric. However, I will demonstrate how these concepts emerge again in "Crítica de la pirámide," which was included in "Postdata," as a new epilogue for *El Laberinto de la Soledad*, after 1968. In his text, Paz combines these concepts with the re-elaboration of his thought about poetry and the poetic experience, which he develops in In *Los Signos en Rotación* (1967).

shedding light on this hidden repository of the people's history, it can express the untimely archetypes that have founded the community.

Aguilar Mora points out that Paz clearly establishes an irreducible opposition between history and myth and, at other instances, between the poem and history, between a poetic experience and a historical experience. On the side of history, there is an empty sign. Paz neglects vital principles of life and while reaffirming unintelligible values such as the myth, he also denies at the same time the superiority of such values to judge and intervene in a specific historical context. On the side of solitude, he situates the myth, which the poem conjures transcending the present and opening a new time. There is a paradoxical co-existence of myth and history, which does not fuse both concepts and their temporalities. Their encounter does not occur in a specific historical time, but rather on an infinite synchronic plane. Aguilar Mora says: "[a]mbos conceptos [myth and history] se dan como figuras retóricas: la historia hacia el pasado; el mito hacia el futuro. El presente sólo es el punto indispensable de referencia, pero siempre está hueco, ni tiene causas" [both concepts (myth and history) are given as rhetorical figures: history toward the past; the myth toward the future. The present is only an indispensable point of reference, but it is always empty, and it does not have any preceding cause] (52-53). Paz's gaze toward the Mexican people's past conflates social and material conditions that have propelled historical processes, to establish the immanent archetypes that found the identity of the community. The myths, which correspond to these archetypes, cyclically recur, adopting different forms. Thus, rather than providing a definition of the myth as such, Paz only focuses on the different forms through which they manifest themselves.

As one of the main figures of the Mexican intellectual milieu, who has exerted a decisive influence in structuring the cultural sphere and who has provided the guidelines to interpret it,

Paz develops a paradigm of thought and fosters a cultural hegemony that neglects the fact that critical intellectual thinking can potentially actually carry out a political intervention to question and subvert the *status quo*. Thus Aguilar Mora claims that Paz's thought is functional to the forms of power that aim to prevent a critical thought which is capable of questioning the material contradictions that structure the reality of the Mexican people. He also argues that Paz' perception of the Mexican intelligentsia's history as a succession of isolated individualities promotes the idea that intellectuals are not capable of conceiving together a collective cultural and emancipatory project.

Paz's dominant figure in the cultural milieu has also prevented rigorous critical studies of his work. Aguilar Mora asserts that there are historical circumstances to explain this lack of criticism, "pero también hay una razón interna de esa impotencia del discurso intelectual: el servilismo solapado, la adulación incondicional, la hipérbole paródica que adopta la mirada 'crítica' ante figuras dominantes como la de Paz" [but there is also an internal reason for this impotence of the intellectual discourse: the hidden servility, the unconditional adulation, parodic hyperbole that critiques assume facing dominant figures such as Octavio Paz's] (18). The reality of power works beneath this situation and determines the dynamic of the cultural realm. Rather than questioning from a critical perspective the role and function that Paz assigned to the intellectuals and creating new values for the intelligentsia, intellectuals have been more inclined to gather together behind the dominant figures of the cultural milieu and participate in the factions' struggles to control the dominant discourse.

As demonstrated, Paz clearly participates in these struggles between different intellectual elites to expand their influence and impose their cultural hegemony. Although Paz permanently insists on the solitude that characterizes the life of every intellectual, he has been actually

involved in the formation of closed groups of intellectuals that fight against other groups to defend the values that have founded their organization. The intellectual elites tend to bury themselves in these struggles for cultural hegemony, which only concern an exclusive minority. Opening real and alternative channels through which the people can express and communicate their own culture, thoughts and values, has been a task that closed circles of intellectuals relegate.

III. Apollo's soldiers: the remnants of the poets' brotherhood.

In his conversation with Claude Fell, as has been already addressed, Paz asserts that the writer's role in the society at large should be to offer a critical thinking without being engaged with a political ideology or the power of the State.[187] He says: "[l]a crítica es, para mí, una forma *libre* del compromiso. El escritor debe ser un francotirador, debe soportar la soledad, saberse un marginal" [For me, criticism is free from commitment. The writers must be akin a sniper, it must bear the solitude knowing that he is a marginal character] (34). How then will be possible to articulate the idea that the writer should be like a solitary sniper, while Paz and other artists and intellectuals collectively participate in a brotherhood? In his quarrel with *Nexos*, he claims to fight, together with other members of the same brotherhood, a crusade against the sect of organic intellectuals. Nevertheless in *El Laberinto de la Soledad*, as in his dialogue with Fell, he insists that the writer live in absolute solitude and marginalized.

[187] See "Vuelta a *El Laberinto de la Soledad,*" (34) in *El Laberinto de la Soledad.*

It will be interesting to consider that the brotherhood, in which Paz has been initiated when he was published in *Sur* journal for the first time, has been scattered. At a certain point in time, the structure of this closed community has been decentralized and their members have been dispersed. Artists and intellectuals may collectively still participate through their individual work in a common cause, a conspiracy that questions the order of things and the power that has imposed this order, but they have to constantly move from one position to another seeking for concealed spots. From this stealthy and marginal position they can carry out their solitary operations. Nevertheless Paz considers that the poet's intervention has a more lethal force to subvert structures of power than the intellectuals' operations, and it is more creative to project an alternative way of living together.

Paz points out that the poet's brotherhood was born as a clandestine organization that hatches a conspiracy to intervene in its milieu. He writes:

> …[c]ada poeta crea a su alrededor pequeños círculos de iniciados, de modo que sin exageración puede hablarse de una sociedad secreta de la poesía. La influencia de estos grupos ha sido inmensa y ha logrado transformar la sensibilidad de nuestra época. Desde este punto de vista no es falso afirmar que la poesía moderna ha encarnado en la historia, no a plena luz, sino como un misterio nocturno y un rito clandestino. Una atmósfera de conspiración y de ceremonia subterránea rodea el culto de la poesía. (69)[188]

[188] See Paz, "El verbo descarnado," in *La Búsqueda del Comienzo*.

> […each poet creates around him small circles of initiated men, so that, without exaggerating, it may be possible to speak about a secret society of poetry. The influence of these groups has been enormous and has been able to transform the sensitivity of our time. From this point of view, it is not false to say that modern poetry has embodied in history, not under the day light, but rather as a hidden nighttime mystery and as a clandestine rite [a phenomenon]. A conspiratorial and underground ceremonial atmosphere surrounds the cult of poetry].

The poet conjures a sacred and secret form of language that, reveling and invoking a mythical origin of the community at large, has potentially a revolutionary power. Nonetheless the structure of the poet's brotherhood has changed through history. Paz thinks that Romantic poets, mid-nineteenth century poets, and a few poets in the twentieth century such as Yeats, Georges, Rilke and Breton, have created clandestine organizations. However he clearly states that contemporary poets can no longer foster the spirit of a secret society around them.

The poet's brotherhood, which Paz points out proliferated during the eighteenth century and nineteenth century, is founded in a specific European historical context. For instance, Paz writes: "[e]l lenguaje de Mallarmé es un idioma de iniciados. Los lectores de los poetas modernos están unidos por una suerte de complicidad y forman una sociedad secreta" [Mallarmé's languages is for initiated men. The modern poets' readers are bonded by sort of complicity and form a secret society] (40).[189] Within this context converge different historical processes that lead to the consolidation of modern states, which trigger several mechanisms to

[189] See Paz, *El Arco y la Lira* (1956). Except as noted all quotations of Paz's book from this point are from the first edition.

discipline the formation process of subjectivities and national identities. The Enlightenment in the eighteenth century and Positivism in the nineteenth century foster and encompass this formation process of subjectivities and identities, as the dominant discourses that determine the conception of men, history and nature. The poets' secret society has to go underground, sometimes behind the visible face of the salons in which the bourgeoisie and intellectuals articulate their ideological position to achieve more political representation. Clandestinely the poets conspire against the power of the State and undermine the hegemonic discourses that determine processes of *subjectivation.*[190]

In *El Arco y la Lira* (1956), as Paz problematizes the transformations that have taken place at the level of the common used of language and at the level of collective life during the twentieth century, he claims that the relationship between the poet and his closed brotherhood is broken. He writes: "[l]a poesía de sectas toca a su fin porque la tensión se ha vuelto insoportable" [the poetry of sects has reached its end, because the tension has become unbearable] (40). Language has been diminished to such an extreme by technicians and journalists, those who the common people recognize as public figures that dominate the superior forms of knowledge, rhetoric, and language, that the poet has been pushed to the margin of the community. From this edge the poetic act becomes a suicidal leap. There is no longer a social fabric and a language mesh that could hold and respond to the gift cyphered in the poem. There

[190] In *Los Hijos del Limo*, Paz writes: "[e]l modernismo fue la respuesta al positivismo, la crítica de la sensibilidad y el corazón—también de los nervios—al empirismo y el cientificismo positivista. En este sentido su function histórica fue semejante a la de la reacción romántica en el alba del siglo XIX. El modernism fue nuestro verdadero romanticismo y, como en el caso del simbolismo francés, su version no fue una repetición, sino una metáfora: otro romanticism" (126). I assume this same logic, which Paz introduces to think about the *modernismo*'s reaction, to think about the formation of the poet's brotherhood as a reaction against a specific cultural and intellectual historical context.

are no more closed circles of initiated men that could receive this cryptic message and infiltrate it into society at large.

The poetry of sects has come to an end, but through their individual and solitary work poets can strike at the pillars that sustain their society and in this manner they still participate in a sort of scattered brotherhood, as if they were members of a selective elite of solitary sharpshooters. Contemporary poets are still members of an exclusive community, since they are the only one who possesses the *arete* of mastering a superior form of language and knowledge. Paz writes: "[l]a poesía revela este mundo; crea otro […] Invitación al viaje; regreso a la tierra natal […] diálogo con la ausencia […] Exorcismo, conjuro, magia […] Arte de hablar en una forma superior; lenguaje primitivo" [poetry reveals this world; it creates another one…it's an invitation to the trip; a returning to the mother land…a dialogue with absence…Exorcism, conjure, magic…The Art of speak in a superior form; primitive language] (13). Poets have to distance themselves from their community at large in order to recover the original source of language, and from this distant position they throw poetic words as if they were arrows aiming to impact the world and change it. These arrows flying away from their actual historical context, in which they were forged and sharped, also drift toward an alternative world, which is created in and projected through poem.

The symbols of the bow and the lyre reflect Paz' conception of the poetic practice and the positioning of the poets' brotherhood. The bow alludes to the distant position that the poet assumes to carve poetic words and shoot them into the world as if they were arrows. The lyre represents the poem as a musical instrument that the poet plays. The poet invests poetic words with the energy that emanates from the language's primordial source. As these poetic words are enounced they flow through the air as if they were musical notes that can resonate and make

visible the truth of things and beings dwelling in the world. The poetic word as an arrow may also destroy these things and beings, but as a musical note it can transform them to create a new world. Hence there is a destructive force that drives the poem, which is first actualized in the violent act the poet exerts on the common use of language to derive and create poetic words, and then on the subversive effects that these words may provoke in the world that the poem creates. The poem also has a pure creative force that the poetic words convey, which can create an alternative world.

The poem reconciles these two forces: a destructive and a creative power. As will be demonstrated, in this reconciliation represented by the symbols of the bow and the lyre there remain cyphered theoretical displacements in Paz's work from a philosophical thinking to a poetic language, a transition from a form of knowledge based on theory and reason, to a poetic knowledge nourished by the myth. It has been argued that as Paz favors poetic language as a cognitive instrument over intellectual language, he hollows out history from material conditions and, consequently, neglects intellectual thinking as a valid way to actually carry out a political intervention in a specific historical context. However, I will later explain that through Paz's conception of poetry it will be also possible to reflect on the violence and conflict that are intrinsic to politics.

Prose and the ordinary used of language have mutilated its originality. Thus poets need to extricate words from this reduction of language and reestablish bridges toward the language's primordial fountainhead. They have to open hidden doors to gain access to this source in which they re-magnetize the poetic language. Paz considers that language and myths are metaphorical representations of reality. They replace actual elements from the real world with symbolic elements. However he believes that these elements could have the same consistency and

incidence in the world, as if they were actual phenomena. Poetic language can function to question the veracity of our beliefs and the moral values that we use to judge our reality. Thus poetic words may be interchanged, without regarding the specific meaning that each of them convey, but attending to the representation of reality that they compose to disrupt and affect our perceptions.

Language is the bridge that men use to cross the gap that separates their isolated individualities from the surrounding social environment. Paz points out that contemporary poetry could transcend its historical context and set free individuals evoking the myths that have founded the community, and represents how these myths are still present in the life of the individuals. As the poem exposes that these myths have been forgotten, but that they still have a crucial role in the present, it can induce the individual, through a poetic experience, to recognize them as intrinsic to his/her identity. This totalizing view that reveals what it has remained repressed gives to the individual the possibility of understanding his/her present conditions and consequently changing them.

Paz believes that poetry represents an exercise of freedom that seeks human emancipation. The poets begin this quest with a violent action on language. They carve the poetic language by uprooting words from the common people's use of language. This deep wound distinguishes poets from the rest of the people and situates them in a marginalized position. Nevertheless, poetry lives in deep layers of the community's being. The community's raw language, its myths, dreams, nightmares and passions nourish the poem. These are the most secret and powerful forces that have founded the community and that the poem invokes and evokes. The poet digs through the layers that have been imposed on language to bring these forces back. Thus Paz believes that the poem founds the community, because it confronts society

with the mystical source that has originated it, and mediates between the society and its foundation.

The poem does not elaborate concepts as theory and philosophy do. For instance, the poem to conjure the origin of the community creates images that convey the intuition of a mythical origin and of the archetypes that have founded the community. It also projects the poetic images of a possible reconciliation of our being with this origin, and with our present world. Paz believes that poetry is the instrument of knowledge that can perform this kind of exploration. The poem can conflate opposed images and distant realities, while making them surge as a coherent unity, which subsumes the plurality that characterizes our reality. Paz explains that philosophical and theoretical concepts do the same thing, but philosophy and theory are subjugated by language and history. They posit concepts that project images, but mutilate and diminish the singularities of these images. They inevitably rely on words to sustain the veracity of these concepts and images, words that are anchored to the historical contexts in which they are enounced.

Poetry, on the contrary, intensifies the singularities of the images and, at the same time, illuminates their possible reconciliation. The poem projects images that can infringe on the principle of contradiction and the fundaments that structure our reality, combining contradictory elements, because it does not seek to represent through words the actual truth of things. In fact, the poetic word transcends actual things. Paz believes that the poetic image reveals our original condition, and this revelation does not stem from a reasonable demonstration or from a transcendental power. The poetic experience transcends language and history. It is a mortal leap toward the source of being, which is beyond time and space. The poetic experience induces us to return, deprived from all forms, to what we had been and guides us to apprehend what we are in

the process of becoming. In this instant of sacred communion, poetry reveals and creates us through the poetic image, but this is not a self-referential picture. Rather, the poetic image is like a lightning bolt that can destroy us or create us, causing us to assume our true condition.

The literary language Paz uses to think about the origin and destiny of the community becomes a dominant discourse in the Mexican cultural milieu. In *Naciones Intelectuales*, Ignaico Sánchez Prado points out a hinge in the history of ideas in Mexico where Paz's essays and poetry published in *El Laberinto de la soledad* (1950), *El arco y la lira* (1956) and *Libertad bajo palabra* (1960), start to create an hegemonic discourse in the literary and cultural milieu, a hegemony which consolidates once Paz definitely returns to Mexico in the 1970s. During the 1960s, the debate about the formation process of a national subjectivity is a main axis around which intellectuals assume different approaches. In the post-revolutionary period, the Mexican intelligentsia still faces the challenge to foster a common identity capable of integrating the popular and middle social strata in a comprehensive national project. In this context, Paz's work promotes literature as the operative discourse to intervene in the formation process of a national identity, and aims to demonstrate that literary discourse is an effective language style with which to reach society at large.

Nevertheless Sánchez Prado clarifies that, rather than understanding the hegemony of Paz's discourse as a consequence of his unique writing style, it should be considered "la forma en que las modalidades literarias del discurso, superan a las filosóficas en la capacidad de articulación a la esfera pública" [the forms in which the literary modes of speech overcome the philosophical ones in their ability to articulate themselves to the public sphere] (225). In contrast with philosophical discourses, which are confined to academic cenacles, literature has a strong resonance in the media and captures the imaginary of the public opinion. After Lázaro Cárdenas'

administration (1936-1940), which aimed to further develop social and economic reforms that were prompted by the Revolution, the project of socialist intellectuals to articulate a political ideological program from the state's apparatus has come to an end. The idea that the intellectual should be an independent figure from the power of the state prevails, a position which Paz strongly defends as he advocates for a critical distance from the power of the state. With the consent of the state and its institution, plus the state's control and connections with the private media, the philosophical discourses and critical thinking expressed by left intellectuals tends to be pushed into the background of the debates about the formation process of national subjectivities, whiles Paz's literary language emerges as the most effective discourse to intervene in this formation process.

Paz proposes that literary language is the proper cognitive instrument to conduct a mythical exploration of modernity. This is a specific manner of understanding the community, which considers that the formation process of a national identity is not the result of a historical process. Sánchez Prado points out that in Paz's system of thought the Mexican identity is "una actualización constante de arquetipos que habitan en el fondo de la conciencia colectiva nacional" [a constant actualization of the archetypes that are dwelling on the bottom of the national collective consciousness] (229). Poetry invokes ancient myths as if they were still present in modernity, playing a fundamental role in the formation process of the community's identity. In this mythical venue it is possible to create a poetic discourse that can intervene in the functioning of the collective life. Thus Paz considers that poetry and politics are similar definitions for a cultural intervention.

In line with Aguilar Mora, Sánchez Prado asserts that Paz configures a supra-historical dimension in his system of thought that obliterates the material conditions of history. As Paz

reconciles and overlaps a mythical past with the present modernity, history ceases to be the process that determines the actual conditions of the community. Furthermore, as a consequence of this conception of history, the people are neglected as political actors that can intervene in the historical processes to subvert the historical circumstances that define their lives. Paz cancels all possibilities for a utopian and revolutionary emancipatory project. Sánchez Prado writes: "[a]ún cuando Paz se mantuvo siempre distanciado de una ideología del Estado, su poética implica una renuncia abierta a la literatura como espacio de conflicto político […]," [even as Paz has always kept a distance from an ideology of the State, his poetry implies an opened resignation to literature as a space of political conflict a resignation that ultimately is functional to the ideology and cultural hegemony that the state fosters] (233). Paz deactivates the political engagement that a cultural expression may have. As he considers that the cultural milieu is separated from the state's hegemony, he ignores that art could express and face the violence and conflict that are intrinsic to politics.[191]

I agree with both Aguilar Mora and Sánchez Prado on the consequences that Paz's hegemonic figure has in the Mexican cultural milieu, and on the idea that he promotes a cultural hegemony that hollows out history from material conditions. Nevertheless I believe that it is possible to tackle, in the first edition of *El Arco y la Lira*, how Paz provokes theoretical displacements from a philosophical thinking to a poetic language and form of knowledge, while the definition that he provides for poetry and the poetic experience still contains and expresses

[191] In a recent article, "El borramiento de la historia. El surrealism como presente perpetuo en *El Laberinto de la Soledad*," Sánchez Prado reelaborates some premises of his previous text. He argues that even though Paz has absorbed the surrealist's definition of literary language as the instrument to induce a sudden and subversive revelation of hidden and secret aspects of reality, he also preserves a critical view of this definition. Sánchez Prado asserts that Paz's vision of history articulates Romanticism's literary notion of history, and different lines of thought, which become more prominent during the 1950s, such as: anthropological and sociological understanding of the myth, studies about the development and dynamics of social formation, and cultural studies of the pre-Columbian past.

the same violence and conflict that are intrinsic to politics. Following these displacements from within the internal logic of his discourse will allow me in the last section to shed new light on the relationship that emerges in his work between politics and poetry. It will also provide new perspectives to analyze how he conceives literary language as a superior form of knowledge that has a more subversive and creative power to question the state of affairs, than do theory and philosophy.[192]

The image of the bow and the lyre are the symbolic elements that in Greek mythology represent the god Apollo. Thus on the cover of the first edition of *El Arco y la Lira*, is engraved an etching of the god of the sun.[193] Paz has explained that the book's title derives from Heraclitus' fragments, probably from fragment 117 in which Heraclitus writes: "[p]eople do not understand how that which is at variance with itself agrees with itself. There is a harmony in the bending back, as in the cases of the bow and the lyre." Paz argues that in this fragment the image of the bow and the lyre alludes to "la lucha de los opuestos, que la poesía convierte en armonía, ritmo e imagen" [the fight between opposed forces, which poetry transforms in harmony, rhythm and image] (25).[194] These mythological images are the coordinates where he situates the point of departure of his book. My contention is that these are also the coordinates that mark Paz's departure from a philosophical thinking toward a poetic thinking, which does not cease to reflect

[192] Yvone Grenier writes: "[…] Paz offers a constructive and original criticism of both modernity and liberalism from what could be called a poet's perspective" (xii). Even thought I do not believe that Paz's critique of liberalism is accurate in denouncing the fundamental contradictions of liberal states—in fact, I will argue that Paz' thought converges in the most deathly characteristics of such political and economic regimes—I agree with her on that that thinking about politics through Paz's intellectual and artistic productions reveals fundamental aspects of contemporary politics.

[193] The Spanish artist Elvira Gascón, who illustrates several literary publications in Spain and Mexico during the 1950s and 1960s, made the etching that represents the Greek God Apollo on the cover of *El Arco y la Lira*, but she does not sign it.

[194] See the prologue of *El Arco y la Lira* for the edition of Paz's complete work.

the ambivalence of life and that captures, perhaps as a poetic intuition, conceptually the ambivalence of politics.

In *El Arco y la Lira*, Paz argues that since Parmenides Western thought has been based on the principles of non-contradiction, which distinguishes what it is and what is not as absolute essences. He claims that Parmenides's philosophy uproots the Being from its primordial chaos and lays the foundation for our way of thinking, which condemns all other forms of understanding the Being that are not based on these principles. Thus mysticism and poetry have been forced to live in a clandestine and diminished existence. Paz also claims that this form of understating the Being, without addressing its original contradictions, excludes men from the cosmic flux and from their own becoming. He points out that Hegel has to go back to Heraclitus's fragments to release Western thought from this static conception of the Being and the universe.

In his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Hegel explains that with Heraclitus the abstract and foggy conception of the pure Being of the Eleatics finally reaches the earth. He says: "[t]he advance requisite and made by Heraclitus is the progression from Being as the first immediate thought, to the category of Becoming as the second. This is the first concrete, the Absolute, as in it the unity of opposites. Thus with Heraclitus the philosophic Idea is to be met with in its speculative form […]" (279). With Heraclitus the philosophical ideas become words that are the elements of an external dialectic. He inaugurates a way of reasoning that takes the dialectic itself as a principle and objectively contemplates the object, without ever reaching its essence, in its immanent dialectic. Hegel asserts that Heraclitus's thought lays the foundation of his logic.

Paz writes about Hegel: "[s]u tentativa nos ha devuelto la salúd. El castillo de cristal de roca de la dialéctica se revela al fin como un laberinto de espejos" [his attempt has given us back our good health. The rock crystal castle of the dialectics revels itself, finally, as a labyrinth of mirrors] (94). Hegel's attempt has given back our wellbeing, because dialectic has opened up and expanded our perceptions and imagination. It causes us to contemplate opposite realities and images, bearing in mind contradictory ideas and their reconciliation. Paz appropriates Hegel's dialectic, but as a literary skill that he adopts and transforms for his poetic purpose. This is his strategy of engagement and poetic reply to Hegel's philosophy, which seeks to radically question dialectical reason. Paz considers that dialectic does not represent the most viable way of attaining knowledge, but he does not shatter the mirrors of the labyrinth. As Hugo Moreno points out, for Paz words are keys and doors, and simultaneously they are also parts of the puzzle and mirrors of the labyrinth.[195] Nevertheless Paz believes that the poetic word represents the foremost attempt of the logos to realize freedom.

Moreno claims that for Paz the process of creating poetic words consists in evoking and invoking the originary logos, which constitutes the act of thinking. He writes: "[t]he goal of Paz's poetic thinking is, thus, to escape the labyrinth-like stage, or never-ending performance of dialectic discourse. His poetic thinking is a form of poetic idealism that seeks to bridge the gap between actuality and potentiality, existence and poetry, fact and vision, objects and words" (221-222). However this is a more complex problem, because Paz is against the historicity of words, images and objects. He invests poetic language and thinking with the capacity of transcending history and reasoning. The dialectical process of reconciliation that poetry performs casts off from dialectical reasoning. Relying on the myth, as its primordial source, poetry brings

[195] See Moreno, "Octavio Paz's Poetic Reply to Hegel's Philosophical Legacy" (220).

to unity what reasoning renders as irreconcilable and antithetical; i.e. the reconciliation of reasoning and imagination.

It is striking to consider that in *El Arco y la Lira*, Paz goes back to the precise moment in the history of philosophy in which reasoning started to build the labyrinth of mirrors. Nevertheless, he seems to be looking for the primordial source that has set in motion dialectical reasoning in order to find the thread that could lead poetry to draw alternatives paths in the labyrinth. Thus Paz through Heraclitus' fragments evokes the mythological figure of Apollo, which embodies the poetic act and provides men with the gift of a superior form of knowledge. Although I consider that in Paz's system of thought there does not seem to be an outside of the labyrinth to be actually reached, I think that he proposes that poetry could reconcile this impossibility. It could engender an experience that could guide men to move within the labyrinth and, facing their instincts and dreams, to conceive and create a free way of being in this labyrinth.

It is also surprising that in this maneuver, Paz does not interpret Apollo's figure through his reading of Nietzsche. In his dialogue with Fell, he argues that Nietzsche's influence has been decisive in writing *El Laberinto de la Soledad*.[196] As has been pointed out before, *El Laberinto* precedes *El Arco*, and there is a set of concepts evolving from the former and then emerging in the latter. However Paz does not think about the mythical figure of Apollo through *The Birth of Tragedy*. Perhaps, it should be considered that in the conversation with Fell, he specifically refers to Nietzsche's more mature work, *The Genealogy of Morals*, as the book that has guided him in his exploration of the nature of language. But it is still striking to consider Paz' innovative

[196] See "Vuelta al *Laberinto de la Soledad,*" in *El Laberinto de la Soledad* (35).

appropriation of Greek mythology. He demonstrates an acute intuition in thinking about this mythical figure beyond Nietzsche's considerations.

In the section "El mundo heroico," which is included in the third chapter, "Poesía e Historia," of *El Arco y la Lira*, Paz certainly follows Nietzsche's approach to Greek Tragedy. He also mentions, among other sources, Raffaele Pettazoni and Werner Jaeger. Although this section is relevant to analyze Paz's understanding of the Greek world, I will not focus my analysis on it because I consider that while he is tracing an aesthetic genealogy that originated in the Greek Tragedy, my intention is to analyze the genealogy of knowledge that he appropriates to invest poetic language with the authority to become a cognitive instrument. Thus I will only point out certain references included in this section, which allude to Greek myth and philosophy, to analyze how he moves from a philosophical knowledge toward a poetic knowledge.

The bow and the lyre in Heraclitus' fragment fifty-one certainly allude to the divine figure of Apollo. And, as it will be explained, Paz is right as he attributes to this god the domain of a superior form of knowledge, which does not stem from reason. Giorgio Colli explains that when we trace the origin of wisdom in the Greek world we find two figures: Apollo and Dionysus. However, he claims that Nietzsche's depiction of the two gods in *The Birth of Tragedy* should be modified. Instead, the supremacy of Apollo over Dionysus should be reestablished, since the domain of wisdom corresponds to the god of Delphi. The Greeks considered that knowing men's future was a form of wisdom. Colli writes that Apollo represented "questo occhio penetrante, il suo culto è una celebrazione della sapienza" [this

piercing eye; his worship is a celebration of wisdom] (15).[197] This form of knowledge was the supreme value of life for the Greeks, which Apollo communicated to them through the oracle.

Notwithstanding, Colli suggests that it seems that Apollo did not want men to fully comprehend the predictions of their future. He writes: "[c']è un elemento di malvagità, di crudeltá nell'immagine di Apollo, che si riflette nella comunicazione della sapienza" [in Apollo's image there is an element of wickedness, of cruelty, which reflects on his communication of wisdom] (16). In this sense, he addresses Heraclitus' fragment 18 regarding Apollo: "[t]he lord whose oracle is at Delphi neither speaks nor conceals, but gives a sign." The Greeks believed that in these signs, which the priests interpreted at Delphi, were cyphered wisdom and truth. Thus Colli claims that Nietzsche's partial depiction of Apollo, as the god of plastic arts and appearance, should be further elaborated to understand the strong connection between the mythical figure and wisdom.[198] Moreover the ferocious features that characterize Apollo should also be analyzed. The etymology of his name for the Greeks seems to suggest the idea of the one who totally destroys.

In this sense, against the grain of Nietzsche's depiction of Apollo as the god of moderation, Colli stresses that Apollo "non è il dio della misura, dell'armonia, ma dell'invasamento, della follia" [is not the God of moderation, of harmony, but rather the god of

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[197] See Colli, *La Nascita della Filosofia*.

[198] Plato reveals clear connections between the figure of Apollo and the domain of wisdom in a pristine passage of *The Phaedrus*, in which as we hear Socrates talking about madness (*mania*), he glorifies it as a higher and divine form of expression. He says: "[i]t might be so if madness were simply an evil; but there is also a madness which is a divine gift, and the source of the chiefest blessings granted to men. For prophecy is a madness, and the prophetess at Delphi and the priestesses at Dodona when out of their senses have conferred great benefits on Hellas, both in public and private life[…]" (29). Plato then observes four different kinds of madness: the art of divination or prophecy; the art of purification by mysteries; poetry or the inspiration of the Muses; love or erotic madness. Plato considers that the prophetic madness is the most relevant and that it lies behind the Delphic cult. See Plato, *The Phaedrus*, "Madness" (244a-245c).

encrypted madness] (20). Apollo and Dionysius share this fundamental affinity for madness (*mania*). Nonetheless he asserts that to Apollo should be attributed the domain of the word and knowledge, while the immediacy of life should be considered as Dionysius' intrinsic characteristic.[199] Colli also distinguishes that while poetic madness corresponds to Apollo, the erotic madness relates to Dionysius. Madness is the primordial source behind knowledge. He writes: "[l]a follia è la matrice della sapienza" [madness is the matrix of knowledge] (21). But the myth precedes madness. This is the remote origin of wisdom, which could be found five centuries before the cult of Apollo was introduced at Delphi.

One of the most ancient myths is the Cretan myth of Minos, Pasiphae, the Minotaur, Daedalus, Theseus, Ariadne and Dionysius. The key element of this myth is the labyrinth. Colli writes about it: "[i]l Labirinto è opera di Dedalo, un Ateniese, personaggio apollineo in cui confluiscono, nella sfera del mito, le capacità inventive dell'artigiano che è anche artista (tramandato come capostipite della scultura) e della sapienza tecnica che è altresì prima formulazione di un *logos* immerse ancora nell'intuizione, nell'immagine" [the labyrinth is the work of Daedalus, an Athenian, who embodies an apollonian character in which converge, in a mythical sphere, the creative capacity of the craftsman and technical knowledge (even though he is also an artist and founder of the art of sculpture), a convergence which is the first formulation of reason still immersed in intuition and imagination] (27-28). The labyrinth is a human invention based on the knowledge of an artist and craftsman who serves Dionysius. Colli asserts that Minos, who asks Daedalus to build the labyrinth, is the secular arm of this bestial divinity.

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[199] Tracing the origin of wisdom leads us to the figure of Apollo and, as *mania* causes the manifestation of his presence through words, we should consider that madness is intrinsic to the Greek's wisdom, which first appears in the form of divination. On the contrary of Nietzsche's depiction of Dionysius, we should consider that the states of drunkenness and euphoria are distinctive characteristics of Apollo. Furthermore the apollonian vision is not of a dream world, as Nietzsche claims. Art is Apollo's domain, but the apollonian view of the world does not hide under the veil of art the obscure abyss of life.

Behind the figure of the Minotaur is hidden Dionysius. Daedalus is an apollonian individual that serves an animal-god. As men make incursions into the labyrinth to confront the god, they fell in Dionysius' trap, which they themselves have built. Dionysius seeks to capture men and takes them back to an animal state. Nevertheless Daedalus also gives to Ariadne the thread with which Theseus escapes from the labyrinth after he kills the Minotaur.

As an archetype the labyrinth prefigures the logos. As men conceive the logos, they get lost in their own creation and fall in the trap that they have created. Colli suggest that Daedalus and Theseus seem to be connected by the Greek tradition to the cult of Apollo. Although this relationship is not mentioned in the Cretan myth, both characters defy Dionysius. The myth seems to be submerged in the domain of the animal god, rather than in the domain of knowledge. Nevertheless Theseus, who does not express dyonisiac inclinations, achieves for men a heroic life, which vindicates the human individual reasoning against nature and animal drives.[200] The symbol that saves a mortal man from the God's blind violence is the thread of the logos, the thread of the rational necessity.

Paz recuperates the thread of logos, but as a principle of order and knowledge for poetry. Instead of following the development of philosophical ideas that will lead to dialectical reason, he submerges the logos in the poetic experience, and reconciles without contradictions reason and imagination. He moves backward heading to the remote origin of the logos toward the myth, where he finds the symbol of the labyrinth. He perceives that the labyrinth is a prefiguration of

[200] However we should not consider that Apollo has defeated Dionysius. We cannot conclude that one god prevails over the other one if we consider the ambivalent nature of Ariadne and the denouement of her mortal life. Ariadne, who is Pasiphae and Phaedra's daughter, rebels against her divine animal nature. She betrays the gods and grants Theseus the thread that saves him, which establishes a connection between mortal men and the gods. However the gods rapidly intervene to interrupt this connection. In more recent myths Ariadne is abandoned in the island of Naos by Theseus and then killed by Artemisia, who restores to Dionysius his immortal wife.

reason, as a perplex dialectic and as an inextricable reasoning. Nevertheless he distinguishes the creative reasoning and imagination of the artist and the craftsman who, still immersed in a mythical realm, conceives Ariadne's thread, which disentangles Theseus from an obscure and imminent threat and grants him the opportunity to kill the animal-god. In sum, this thread of the logos intertwines creativity and a lethal power to set free a mortal man.

Apollo expresses through artistic expressions and wisdom, but the apollonian fundamentally concerns the intellect, the word and the sign. Paz fuses these apollonian domains in his conception of poetry. The poetic word in the poem is cyphered as a sign that conveys a superior form of understanding. As men step in the path of the poetic experience to apprehend this sign, they can experience through their imagination all the potentiality of their Being and through reason envision all their future possibilities. In this sense, the poetic image is not purely an abstraction of reality. As if it is an intelligible object it can be contemplated through reason and touched through the senses, as it can be also revealed through imagination. Furthermore the poetic experience can also guide men to glimpse the divine. Paz writes: [l]a experiencia poética o religiosa –o como quisiera llamársela a ese contacto con lo 'otro'– trasciende el existir: es, aquí mismo, 'la otra vida'. O, al menos es una de las pocas posibilidades que tenemos de entreverla. En esto radica el valor de la poesía como experiencia del ser" [the poetic or religious experience—or whatever we will call that contact with the 'other'—transcends our existence: here there's the 'other life'. Or, at least is one of the few possibilities that we have to envision it. In this lies the value of poetry as an experience of the Being] (254).[201] The poetic experience creates a communication between the mortals' and the gods' world.

[201] See the epilogue for the first edition of *El Arco y la Lira*.

The intrinsic duplicity of Apollo's nature reflects the metaphysical fracture between the mortals' world and the gods' world. Apollo's words through the oracle express his wisdom, which is incorporated in the dialogues and discussions that are elaborated in an abstract reasoning. On the one hand, he can predict and enact a hostile future for men. For instance, at the beginning of the *Iliad*, Apollo's arrows descend on the field of the Achaeans to cause death. He does not provoke a quick death, a direct hit, but rather he causes death through a disease. The bow, the Asian weapon that characterizes him, alludes to an indirect action, which is mediated and differed. In this hostile action is revealed his cruelty and the obscure prediction that emanated from the oracle. Nevertheless, on the other hand, he can also provoke a cheerful transfiguration of the material world. He can intertwine terrestrial images with the magic of arts.

Greek mythology represents the projection of Apollo's arrows and words into our world with the symbols of the bow and lyre. Colli writes: "l'arco, a designare la sua azione ostile, e la lira, a designare la sua azione benigna" [the bow designates its hostile actions and the lyre designates its benign action] (40). Heraclitus does not mention Apollo in his fragments, but he introduces his distinctive symbols to understand the nature of things. In the fragment 115, he says "[t]he name of the bow [βιός] is life [βίος], but its work is death." In Greek the word bow has the same sound as the word life. The Greeks understood that life is violent and that it can be used as an instrument to cause destruction. Heraclitus brings together the duplicity of Apollo's nature in the fragment from which Octavio Paz borrows the title for his book.

Heraclitus' idea of harmony evokes the unifying intuition of Apollo's antithetical manifestations through a consideration of the actual material construction of the bow and the lyre. During the era in which Apollo myth emerged in Greece the bow and the lyre were built following an analogous linear curve and utilizing the same material: the goat's horns, although

their ends were linked with a different inclination. Therefore, the actions of the bow and the lyre, the actions of causing death and producing beauty, stem from the nature of the same god. They express the divine nature of Apollo, which is cyphered in an identical hieroglyph. Only from our point of view, which is a perspective that relies on our illusory world of appearances, these symbols are distorted and emerge as if they were contradictory fragments of Apollo's nature.

Paz's conception of poetry, which reconciles a destructive and a creative force, evokes the unifying intuition of Apollo's antithetical manifestations. He considers that Apollo induces mortal men to moderation, because he points out what their limitations are according to the gods and how to accept their laws. Nevertheless, he does not think about moderation in Nietzsche's sense. He thinks about moderation as the outcome of the reconciliation of antagonistic forces, but this does not mean overcoming the tension between the destructive and the creative force. Rather this reconciliation for Paz is a unity that does not cease to be torn apart. Men are in a permanent tension as they are the strings of the bow and the lyre.

Paz perceives that Apollo's arrows and words are linked to the domain of human reasoning and abstraction, but he believes that poetry can capture the precise moment of this obscure transition from the divine sphere to the human sphere, before it becomes dialectical reasoning. Poetry can open a bridge over the metaphysical fracture between the Gods' world and the earthly world. Nevertheless poetry does not decipher the enigma encrypted in this passage. As an enigmatic sign the poetic word reveals its unknown origin. It evokes an obscure, sacred and ineffable origin, which expresses the metaphysical distance from the divine world. However, on the other hand, Paz establishes a clear genealogy of knowledge to invest the poetic word with

the capacity to carry out an intervention in the human world, an incursion that represents Apollo's power, and bridges the gap between the mortals' world and the divine world.[202]

In "Los signos en rotación," apropos of Rimbaud's poetry, Paz claims that the poet not only unveils the future, but also guides the present toward this future. He writes: "[l]a palabra poética no es menos 'materialista' que el futuro que anuncia: es movimiento que engendra movimiento, acción que transmuta el mundo material. Animada por la misma energía que mueve a la historia, es profecía y consumación efectiva, en la vida real, de esa profecía. La palabra encarna, es poesía práctica. La alquimia del verbo es un delirio: *viellerie poétique, hallucination, sophisme de la folie*" [the poetic word is not less 'materialistic' than the future that it announces. It is a movement that engenders movement, action that transmutes the material world. The same energy that moves history animates poetry, which is a prophecy and an effective consummation in the real life of that prophecy. The world is already an embodiment; it is practical poetry. The alchemy of the verb is a delusion: old-fashion poetry, hallucination, sophism of madness] (249-250). As Apollo's words are expressed through the oracle, the poetic word enounces a prophecy and enacts it in the material world created by the poem. As the font of apollonian knowledge, which originated in a remote mythical time and stemmed from madness, the poet professes a form of knowledge that seems to be infused with the same gases that submerged the Pythia in a state of hallucination. In a repetition of Apollo's hostile and benevolent actions, the poets

[202] It may also interesting to consider that Paz also thinks about poets as if they were like Prometheus, the philanthropic hero, who defies the Gods and gives humanity the gifts of fire, which creates continuity between the earthly world and the God's mythical world. In *El Arco*, as Paz points out the differences between the poet and the magician, he counterpoises to the latter the figure of Prometheus as an example of the poet. He writes: "La rebelión del mago es solitaria, porque la esencia de la actividad mágica es la búsqueda del poder [….] frente a la figura del mago se levanta Prometeo […] ni mago, ni filósofo, ni sabio: héroe, robador del fuego, filántropo…La soledad del mago es camino sin retorno […]" (54).

reconcile these two antithetical forces in their incursions in the world. They can destroy and subvert the world, and they can also create a magic transfiguration of the material world into poetic images. This is the prophecy that Paz invokes for a scattered dynasty of solitary men. Poets are Apollo's soldiers and their mission is to change the face of the world.

IV. Sacrifice and the origin of the community.

While the second edition of *El Arco y la Lira* (1967), which Paz undertakes on the occasion of its French translation, does not abandon the premises that poetry performs a revelation of what has remained hidden about the community, and offers a critical view on society at large, it does dissolve the subversive power of poetry. Paz has already anticipated this more conservative position. In *Puertas al Campo* (1966), he writes: "[e]l arte moderno se inició como una crítica de nuestra sociedad y como una subversión de valores. En menos de cincuenta años la sociedad ha asimilado y digerido esos venenos" [the modern art begun as a critique of our society and as subversion of values. In less than fifty years, society has assimilated and digested these poisons] (277). Maarten Van Delden points out that the idea that the modern society has neutralized poetry's subversive power becomes a prominent theme in Paz' thought since the early 1960s.[203] The poetic words that the poet shoots into the world as if they were arrows, which were imbued with the poison of the archaic mythical knowledge and propelled by the frenzy of madness, can no longer strike the pillars that sustain the structures of the community.

[203] See Van Delden, "The Incomplete End of Modernity," in *Gunshot at the Fiesta* (130).

In the first edition of *El Arco y la Lira*, Paz points out that in Heraclitus' vision of the Being: "[…] el universo está en la tensión, como la cuerda del arco o las de la lira. El mundo 'cambiando, reposa.' Pero Heráclito no sólo concibe el ser como devenir […] sino que hace del hombre el lugar de encuentro de la guerra cósmica. El hombre es polémico porque en él todas las fuerzas terrestres y divinas se dan cita y pelean" [The world is in tension as the strings of the bow or the lyre. The world changing rests. But Heraclitus does not only conceive the being as becoming […], but he also makes the man the meeting place of the cosmic war. The man is polemic because in him all the terrestrial and divine forces meet and struggle agains each other] (198). The poetic act moved by the becoming of the cosmic flux intervenes in the material world, and at the same time transcends it, to create a totalizing image that subsumes men in a divine sphere and releases them from historical constrictions. The poetic experience provokes concord between the antithetical forces that converge within men to induce them to moderation. In 1956, Paz believes that this Greek ethos and understanding of the universe should be propitiated in our present. Furthermore, he writes: "[e]n un libro reciente (*L'homme revolté*), Alber Camus pide una rebelion fundada en la mesura mediterránea. El mediodía griego es su símbolo, punto fijo y vibrante donde se reconcilian los opuestos que hoy nos desgarran: orden y libertad, revolución y amor" [, in a recent book (*L'homme revolté*), Alber Camus asks for a rebellion founded on the Mediterranean moderation. The Greek midday is a symbol, a fixed and vibrant point where the opposites, which today torn us apart, reconcile: order and liberty, revolution and love] (205). In 1967, however, he removes the entire paragraph in which he praises Heraclitus' philosophy and also his comment about Camus' idea of rebellion founded on Mediterranean moderation, which seems to be inspired by the Greek god of the sun that reconciles opposite forces.

It is interesting to notice that Paz, in the forward of the second edition, writes: "[l]a inmovilidad es una ilusión, un espejismo del movimiento; pero el movimiento, por su parte, es otra ilusión, la proyección de Lo Mismo que se reitera en cada uno de sus cambios y que, así, sin cesar nos reitera su cambiante pregunta –siempre la misma" [Immobility is an illusion, a mirage of movement; but movement, on its own, is another illusion the projection of the Same that repeats itself in each of its changes and, in this manner, without ever ceasing, reiterates its changeable question—always the same] (39). It would be possible to consider that Paz changes his point of view and adopts a position closer to the Eleatic school founded by Parmenides to counterbalance Heraclitus' view of Being and universe. Notwithstanding, Emir Rodríguez Monegal claims that this shift should be considered as related to Paz' life experience living outside of Mexico during the eleven years that separate the two editions. He first lives in France, where he acquires a better grasp of the current trends in French thought, such as structuralism. Then he lives in India as the Mexican ambassador for six years until his abrupt resignation in 1968. From India Paz develops a critical perspective of the Western world and its culture. He forges new conceptual pillars on which he pivots to transform his ideology, theories, and how he conceives poetry and the poetic experience.

The second edition of *El Arco y la Lira* crystalizes this metamorphosis, which Rodríguez Monegal celebrates as he explains how Paz assumes a more conservative position. He asserts that Paz works against the Mediterranean moderation, which as has been explained masks the eternal struggle between antagonistic forces, and posits an oriental vision of the world. This shift encompasses the modification of his vision of the position and function of the poet in society, and the relationship between poetry and revolution. In the first edition of his book, Paz writes: [n]o hay poema sin creador" [there is not poem without its creator] (37). At the end of another

paragraph: "[p]oesía es creación, acto libre" [poetry is creation, a free act], and then, "[e]jercicio de la libertad, la creación poética […]" [the poetic creation: exercise of freedom] (38). He also writes: "[l]a creción poética no es sino el ejercicio de la libertad humana. Lo que se llama inspiración es sólo la manifestación o despliegue de esa libertad" [the poetic creation is not more than exercising human freedom. What is called inspiration is only the manifestation or unfolding of this freedom] (188). In the second edition, Paz eliminates these statements that reaffirm emancipation as a crucial feature of poetry. The poet no longer emerges as a furtive archer that from a distant position shoots his subversive words.

Paz' idea of poetry as a kind of magic and secret formula that conjures human emancipation is elided. He tends to displace his reflections on the relationship between poetry and revolution, between poetry and politics, to the new epilogue for the second edition, "Los signos en rotación."[204] Monegal claims that one of the most relevant themes in the new epilogue is "[…] el fracaso de la aventura poética superrealista que es el paralelo al fracaso de la aventura revolucionaria […]" [the failure of the surrealist poetic adventure that is parallel to the failure of the revolutionary adventure] (44). Paz seems to leave behind his conviction that poetry could carry out a revolutionary operation. Monegal asserts that as Paz strengthens his perception of history not as a linear time, but as cyclical he finally abandons the revolutionary option. According to the Marxist tradition the revolution will be the outcome of a historical progression of the intrinsic contradictions inherent in capitalist societies. Paz believes that in the modern era

[204] This text had been already published in *Sur* journal, in 1965, two years before the second edition of *El Arco y la Lira*, is published.

the rupture becomes a tradition, which cyclically recurs rather than provoking a systemic change.[205]

Nevertheless it should be stressed that Paz does not abandon the idea that poetic knowledge and literary language facing history can still provide a critique of society. In "Los signos en rotación," as he assumes the failure of modern poetry to reconcile poetry and action, he still ruminates on the question about how it will be possible to perform such a reconciliation. He considers that poetry transcends history, but that it could also intersect at some point with historical time and transform the collective life. As has been already explained, poetry can provoke a reconciliation and, at the same time, a liberation of opposite elements. The poetic words can erupt in history, and also drift beyond history. Nonetheless, poetry and society are in a permanent reciprocal relationship that affects and transforms both of them. While society affects poetry by providing the language on which the poet works, poetry can affect and transform society. Paz believes that poetry can engender a creative community that, rebuilding the social fabrics and solidarity ties among individuals, could guide us to recognize our individual freedom and, as intrinsic to this act of self-recognition, to perceive others' individual freedom. This creative community will be a free society. Human relationships will not be based on domination, but rather on the mutual recognition of our freedom as well as the others'.

However Paz states that nowadays the fracture between poetry and the society at large has deepened and it seems to be unbridgeable. It is no longer possible for poetry to perform the totalizing operation that could drive us to reconcile with ourselves and, consequently, with the other individuals of our community. The image of the world has been completely disjointed in fragments and it is not possible for us to apprehend from our present conditions the archetypes

[205] See Paz, *Los Hijos del Limo*.

that constitute our community. This dispersion is resolved apparently in the uniformity of the image. The universality of technical development in communications and media gives us the illusion that we are all contemplating the same image. However this apparent uniformity in fact neglects the plurality that constitutes our reality. Technology does not provide a new image of the world. It provokes the radical fragmentation of reality, without inducing any kind of reconciliation, which is crucial to perceive that we belong and participate in a community founded on the same old mythology and archetypes.

Under these contemporary circumstances the poets are forced to live in a circle that encloses all of us in an eternal present and causes us to live enmeshed in a perpetual instant. Paz asserts that facing these conditions poets have to dwell within this closed circle in two contradictory ways. They have to live the present as if it was infinite and, on the other hand, as if this present was going to be annihilated at every second. Imagination can only exalt and recuperate the ambivalence of such a present. Nevertheless, the poets have to wake up facing the future, and the poetic image has to convey and accomplish the prophecy of an alternative future. Thus Paz asserts that although in the last thirty years, due to the actual experiences of communist regimes, the revolutionary action and the poetic act seem to be incompatible there is still a strong link that connects them. Poetry cannot renounce the task of projecting an alternative emancipated community, which will be based on individual freedom and on the recognition of the others' freedom.

Paz believes that imagination overpowering the radical fragmentation of the world could still reveal and discover our presence in this world. The poetic image could still project the metaphors, which even though they are pivoting on a small and tiny fragment of our reality, could allow us to perceive our position in this chaos of fragmented images and also give us the

chance to perceive that the others are in similar conditions. Paz points out that the poetic experience can still discover our reality in this disperse cosmos, while the poem can still project that the other's free existence is inherent to our freedom. Writing a poem entails regrouping fragments, creating figures, and, at the center of the poem planting the seed of a core of meanings around which signs are orbiting. He writes:

> Al imaginar el poema como una configuración de signos sobre un espacio animado no pienso en la página del libro: pienso en las Islas Azores vistas como un archipiélago de llamas una noche de 1938, en las tiendas negras de los nómades en los valles de Afganistán, en los hongos de los paracaídas suspendidos sobre una ciudad dormida, en un diminuto cráter de hormigas rojas en un patio urbano, en la luna que se multiplica y anula y desaparece y reaparece sobre el pecho chorreante de la India después del monzón. (261)
>
> As I imagine the poem as a configuration of signs on an animated space, I do not think on the book's page, but rather I think about the Azores Islands seen as an archipelago of flames, on a night of 1938. I think about the black tends of nomads in the Afghanistan's valleys, about the parachutes mushrooms suspended over a sleeping city, about a tiny crater of red ants in an urban patio, about the moon that multiplies and nullifies itself, and disappears, and reappears on the oozing chest of India after the monsoons.

Paz closes the new epilogue, "Los signos en rotación," going back to the point of departure of his book, Heraclitus' fragment, to rethink the poetic experience and the poem. He writes: "[l]a lira, que consagra al hombre y así le da un puesto en el cosmos; el arco, que lo dispara más allá de sí mismo" [the lyre, which consecrates the man and thus gives him a position in the cosmos; the bow, which throws the man beyond himself] (273). Now the lyre represents the poetic experience that situates us in the fragmented universe, and the bow alludes to the poem that breaks the circle in which we are confined in our present to project a new way of living together.

The potential subversive power of poetry, which is a prominent conceptual theme in the first edition of *El Arco y la Lira*, is moderated in the second edition. Nevertheless, poetry does not lose the potential to offer a sharp criticism of society at large. Poetry, as a cognitive instrument that can illuminate what has remained hidden about the collective life, could still set free men from their present conditions and invite them to actively intervene in this present to change it. But the nature of this potential of poetry to intervene in history is different in the first edition and in the second edition of the book. In the former, Paz insists on a totalizing view that subsumes men in a divine sphere, and reconciles them with a mythological dimension that still affects and has a decisive role in the formation process of the community's identity. In the latter, poetry situates men in their present and reconciles them with the others through a sort of prophecy that projects them into an alternative future for the community.

Paz's different approaches to the poem and the poetic experience, one of them moving backward toward a remote mythological origin, while the other one positioning men in their present and projecting them toward an alternative future, converge in his essay "Crítica de la pirámide," to confront historical horror. In his text, which is an expanded version of the lecture that he delivers at the University of Texas at Austin, on October 30, 1968, after the Tlatelolco

massacre on October 2, Paz develops a harsh critique of the Mexican society and of the P.R.I, which had been the ruling political party for almost forty years. On the one hand, the essay explores the mythical origin of the Mexican community to argue that the massacre was a reenactment of the Aztec sacrificial ritual. On the other, as he situates Mexican society in its present, he projects an alternative future for the community. After I analyze Paz's first displacement toward a mythical past to think about the sacrificial ritual at the origin of the community, I will articulate a literary analysis of his poem "Mariposa de obsidiana," in which he crystalizes crucial aspects of this maneuvering. Then, as I analyze his diagnosis of the Mexican community's present and his prognosis for its future, I will shed new light on his political position.

Paz points out that after the Aztec Empire falls subsequent political regimes until the present have perpetuated a pyramidal structure of power that incubates the cyclical recurrence of the sacrificial ritual, a bloody ceremony that has founded the Mexican community and, remaining cyphered, still constitutes it. The brutal repression of the students' protest is the outcome of an institutional and congenital disease. Paz traces the genealogy of this fatal filament that it is interweaved with the strings of power and wealth that the P.R.I. holds. The party has configured a strong hierarchical structure that does not correspond to a democratic political party. It is a bureaucratic organization that exerts political and administrative functions to secure political domination, which it achieves not only through the exercise of violence, but mainly through the control of all sectors of society organized under a corporatist regime: unions, farmers' organizations, and the middle class. The P.R.I.'s political monopoly also relies on the complicity of the media to control the masses and form the public opinion.

Nevertheless Paz asserts that the rigid hierarchical structure of the party has become too inefficient and obsolete to provide answers to the middle class and students' demands, which advocate for democratic political structures and spaces of dialogue to foster an inclusive political participation. Paz explains that in the last two decades of economic prosperity the emergence and consolidation of the middle class has changed the economic and social structures of the country. However the party has not been able to encompass these social changes so as to provide political representation to this emerging social stratum, which also expresses itself through the students' demands. The party only forms new political leaders within its bureaucratic structure and disregards democratic principles. New politicians have to follow and subordinate themselves under the party's mechanisms of promotion and recognition, which are under the control of those members who hold a superior position in the ranks of the organization.

Furthermore the P.R.I. cannot provide answers to these demands and the people cannot propitiate a democratic change, not only due to the party's pyramidal bureaucratic structure, but also because this pyramid embodies an imaginary reality that the people cannot disentangle. Paz claims that the party and the president are mythical projections that condense the image that the Mexicans have about power. On October 2, 1968, the myths that nourish these projections remerge again to consummate a sacrificial ritual. The rite of sacrifice is a foundational aspect of the community, which has been repressed, lying in deep layers of its mythical origin and emerging at Tlatelolco Square as a wandering ghost that becomes a bloody nightmare. Paz claims that Mexicans have to recognize that this specter stems from their community's origin and collective history, but also that it is still dwelling within themselves. He writes: "[d]oble realdiad del 2 de octubre de 1968: ser un hecho histórico y ser una representación simbólica de nuestra historia subterránea o invisible […] lo que se desplegó ante nuestros ojos fue un acto ritual: un

sacrificio" [double reality of October 2, 1986: being a historical event and a symbolic representation of our underground or invisible history…what it was developed in front of our eyes was a ritual act: a sacrifice] (277). The massacre exposes on the plane of the visible history an invisible and subterranean history, which violently emerges to claim the blood of the victims.

Mexican geography and the pyramid are archetypes that also convey symbols that illuminate the hidden history that the Tlatelolco massacre exposes. For Paz the actual geography of the country, a space formed by two mountain chains that, arising from the oceans' shores, form a plateau at the center of the Mexico, on which Anahuac valley is lying, represents a truncated pyramid, alike the Aztecs' pyramid that had at the top of it a flat surface on which the human bodies were sacrificed for the gods. He explains that the altar for the sacrifices was the converging point of the human and the divine worlds. The sacrifices ensured the continuity of both human and cosmic time. Creation and destruction are antithetical for men, but identical for the gods. The sacrificial rituals reproduced the game of destruction and creation that the gods play. These rituals also sealed the connection between men and the divine, and their reciprocity.

The Aztecs considered that the political and the religious domains were not different. The brutal political domination that they exerted over other groups in the region and the ritual wars that they carried out to capture prisoners to be used for the sacrificial rituals, correspond to their belief about the eternal cycle of destruction and creation that secured the continuity of life. They believed that they were the instruments of a divine task that consisted in serving, maintaining and extending the solar cult, which demanded the human blood to preserve the cosmic order and flux. Paz claims that unconsciously this model of political power remains the same: "la pirámide y el sacrificio" [the pyramid and the sacrifice] (281). There is a secret thread that extends from the pre-colonial past and reaches the modern state. The people have made their own the Aztecs'

vision of the world and strengthen the continuity of the myth of the pyramid and the sacrificial ritual.

Imagination can provide a critique of this archetype of political power, but it is not capable of actually subverting it. Poetry cannot intervene in history to actually confront the assassination of students. It can neither stop the bullets that were fired by the army nor answer with similar lethal power.[206] I understand that for Paz poetry, however, can invoke the myths that nourish the tragic night of Tlatelolco. It can illuminate a reconciliation of antithetical forces (destruction and creation), of different realities (a mythical past and the modern present), which for men are irreconcilable, but that in fact determine their reality. The poem captures the readers' imagination, drives them to perceive the contradictions, and the secret forces that configure them. From this poetic experience a critical perspective should arise to actually lead them to question their reality.

In "Los signos en rotación," Paz writes: "[l]a poesía no se propone consolar al hombre de la muerte sino hacerle visulumbrar que vida y muerte son inseparables: son la totalidad. Recuperar la vida concreta significa reunir la pareja vida-muerte […]" [poetry does not intend to comfort man facing death, but rather to make him envision that life and death are inseparable: they are part of a totality. To recover the actual life means to join the life-death couple] (261). Following these lines I read his poem "Mariposa de obsidiana" (1951), and analyze how the poem conveys symbols that reconcile the sacrificial ritual and the creation of life.[207] The poem

[206] One day after the massacre, Paz writes the poem "México: Olimpiada de 1968," which expresses a bitter lament, shame and anger as a consequence of the violence exerted by the security forces, which had the clear objective of disarticulating the students' movement and protests before the imminent beginning of the Olympic games. See Paz, *Obra Poética* (429).

[207] This poem is included in Paz's book *¿Águila o sol?* (1951), and it has been already studied in detail how the poems collected in this book reflect the deep influence of the surrealist's aesthetic in Paz's

digs in deep layers of the Mexican mythical identity and fusing apparently opposite elements, it creates a totalizing vision of this identity. The poem's title alludes to *Iztpapálotl*, "diosa representada con cabeza de calavera, cuerpo de aguila erizada de cuchillos, patas de jaguar y capa con alas inflamadas de mariposa" [a goddess represented with a skull head, a body of an eagle bristling with knives, legs of a jaguar and a cape of inflamed butterfly wings] (342).[208] The female divinity represents the sacrificial instrument that Aztecs employed in their rituals; obsidian was the material that they used to sculpt the knife used in the rituals. Her figure is associated with destruction and war, with death and human sacrifice. However she also symbolizes fertility and she is the protector of births. For the Aztecs in this figure converged the violent act of giving death and in turn the miracle act of giving life.

The first line of Paz's poem evokes *Iztpapálotl*'s profound sorrow as the guardian of life: "[m]ataron a mis hermanos, a mis hijos, a mis tíos. A la orilla del lago de Texcoco me eché a llorar" [they killed my brothers, my children, my uncles. On the shore of Texcoco Lake I began to weep] (83). After Cortés controlled Texcoco, which was an ancient Aztec city, and killed its sovereign he laid the foundation for the conquest of the Aztec empire. *Iztpapálotl* is weeping, suffering due to this historical humiliation and, furthermore, because she has been captured. Paz writes: "[m]e cogieron suavemente y me depositaron en el atrio de la Catedral […] Yo era la motaña que engendra cuando sueña, la casa del fuego, la olla primordial donde el hombre se cuece y se hace hombre" [they gently picked me up, and left me at the atrium of Cathedral] (83). Eduardo Becerra analyzes these lines and explains that after the XVI century *Iztpapálotl* has been bound to the cult of the Virgin of Guadalupe. For this reason, he argues that she also

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writing. For an interesting analysis of surrealist elements in this poem see Becerrra, "Mariposa de Obsidiana," de Octavio Paz: el surrealism y la voz del mito".

[208] See Solares, *Madre terrible: la diosa en la región de México antiguo*.

expresses in the poem her nostalgic feelings about the impossibility of returning to her original paradise, in which she was the force that regulated and generated life; she says: "[e]stoy sola y caída, grano de maíz desprendido de la mazorca del tiempo" [I am alone and fallen; a corn grain detached from the corncob of time] (84-85).

Nevertheless, the poem also conveys the possibility of overcoming this everlasting motionless present time and reconciling the present with a mythical past.[209] The poem reveals that this archaic origin has not been lost and that it is possible to recuperate it. This is not a nostalgic glance over the past. It is an attempt to go deeper into the mythical and symbolical resonances that emanate from the past to illuminate the continuity of a cosmic flux. In his poem Paz draws lines that connect the mythological past with the present. For instance, as has been mentioned, the cult of the Virgin of Guadalupe, which is nourished by the mythical figure of *Iztpapálotl*, still nowadays is a fundamental part of the Mexican identity.[210] Paz also situates *Iztpapálotl* in a modern context. Alluding to the *Iztpapálotl* figure as the embodiment of apparently antithetical forces, the divine figure says: "[s]iémbrame entre los fusilados. Naceré del ojo del capitan" [sow me among the executed by firearms. I will be borned from the captain's eye] (85). Perhaps, it will be possible to imagine that *Iztpapálotl* flew that tragic night over Tlatelolco Square. However, it will be impossible to argue that in this flight of the *mariposa de obsidiana* something new was created.

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[209] Becerra argues that the divine figure asks the poet to posse her and that from this erotic encounter it will be possible to travel back to the lost paradise. She says: "[lluéveme, asoléame. Mi cuerpo arado por el tuyo ha de volverse un campo donde se siembra uno y se cosecha ciento […]. Toca mis pechos de yerba. Besa mi vientre, piedra de sacrificios […] yo soy el centro fijo que mueve la danza," and that from this erotic encounter between the two the poem consummates a reconciliation with the mythical origin (85).

[210] In *El Laberinto de la Soledad*, Paz studies at length the strong symbolic meaning that the Virigin of Guadalupe has for the Mexican community. See specially the chapters: "Todos Santos, día de muertos," "Los hijos de la Malinche," and "Conquista y colonia."

In "Crítica de la pirámide," Paz does not aim to criticize the original myths that have founded the Mexican community and that secretly drove the execution of the Tlatelolco massacre. As he does in his poem, he recuperates the mythical past to feel and grasp how rooted it is in the Mexican identity. He reveals the persistence of the myths in Mexican daily life, how they cohabit with the customs of the people, and how in the case of the sacrificial ritual, they persists as a latent thread. He does not criticize the Aztecs' cosmogony, but rather he questions the political order that they inaugurated, and that has been perpetuated through history, an order which professes the cult of the pyramid and sacrifice. Enrico Santí has drawn attention to this crucial distinction of Paz' approach to the Mexican myths, as he analyzes how Paz examines the Mexican *fiesta*. I will follow Santí's line of analysis to then tackle Paz's conception of the sacrificial ritual from a new angle.

Paz considers that the *fiesta*, in contrast to the sacrificial ritual, is a healthy ritual that releases the repressed desires and feelings of the Mexican people. He considers that in the confusion of the *fiesta* the people let themselves go and express without constrictions crucial aspects of their originality. He writes: "[i]nscrita en la órbita de lo sagrado, la Fiesta es ante todo el advenimiento de lo insólito. La rigen reglas especiales, privativas, que la aíslan y hacen un día de excepción. Y con ellas se introduce una lógica, una moral, y hasta una economía que frecuentemente contradicen las de todos los días" [the Party, inscribed in the sphere of the sacred, is foremost the becoming of the incredible. It is ruled by special privative norms, which isolates the Party and makes it a day of exception. And with these rules is also introduced a logic, a moral, and even an economy that frequently contradicts the daily life moral and economy] (72). The *fiesta* opens up a new time. It is a revolt that subverts the moral values that constrict the people's everyday life and liberates them from the economy that governs their desires. Paz does

not perceive a latent conflict in this exceptional state, but he aims to dissolve the alienation that in the *fiesta* is suspended by the people's frenzy and reconcile them with those repressed drives that are violently released only in an exceptional day.

Santí points out that Paz's perception of the *fiesta* as a revelation of the sacred, as an expression of a kind of excess and pure expenditure, derives from the work of members of the *Collège de Sociologie*, namely Georges Bataille and Roger Caillois. He argues that Paz' approach to the *fiesta* particularly relies on Caillois' book, *Men and the Sacred*, to develop what Santí calls his "teoría *económica* del sacrificio que incluye el ritual de la fiesta" [economic theory of sacrifice that includes the ritual of the party] (189). Although Paz argues that he rejects Caillois' economic theory, because he considers that it is incomplete, Santí insists on that Paz' idea of the *fiesta* as a radical rupture stems from Caillois idea of this state as a primordial chaos. Caillois writes: "[i]t is the ideal place for metamorphoses and miracles as nothing has yet been stabilized, no rule pronounced, and no form fixed" (103-104).[211] Nevertheless Santí admits that Paz introduces a relevant shift as he names the *fiesta*, "revuelta," rather than waste or expenditure (73).

Paz emphasizes an ethical component of the fiesta over an economic feature. He writes: "[e]llas nos liberan, así sea momentáneamente, de todos esos impulsos sin salida y de todas esas materias inflamables que guardamos en nuestro interior" [they liberate us, even for just a moment, from all of our dead end drives and from all of those inflammable matters that we keep in ourselves]. (74). The *fiesta* provokes a radical rupture that reconciles the people with their natural original state, in which there are not social and economic differences, but only freedom. This is the sacred value that the *fiesta* has, which the people express in this day of exception, but

[211] See Caillois, "The Sacred as Transgression: Theory of the Festival," in *Man and the Sacred*.

still repress in their daily life. Santí also claims that Paz' and Cailloi's thought coincide, because as both of them think about the *fiesta* as an expression of the people's desire to return to a primordial state, they reveal their indebtedness to Freud's notion of death drive, which describes the human desire to return to a non-differentiated state of inert matter.

Furthermore Paz believes that, as in the case of the *fiesta*'s sacred meaning, death's sacred meaning has been also forgotten and repressed, which strengthens the connection of his ideas to the domain of Freud's theory of psychoanalysis. Paz considers that the people who are driven by the frenzy of the *fiesta* open themselves up, they wound themselves, but without apprehending the sacred value that which they express. The same mechanism functions to determine the peoples' relationship with death. Mexicans have an intimate connection with death, and more so when it is caused by the sacrificial ritual. Nevertheless, they are also indifferent to death, because they have repressed the sacred value that it had for their ancestors. They cannot perceive how death still creates a sacred communion that binds them and constitutes their community.[212]

In his essay, "Crítica de la pirámide," Paz attempts to situate the massacre of Tlatelolco as a present that in opening up itself and wounding the students' bodies, reveals the sacred value that the sacrificial ritual still has in Mexicans' identities and community. The people assume

[212] It will remain pending for a future development of this chapter to study how Paz' considerations of the sacred and the sacrificial ritual converge with Georges Bataille's research. Both of them seem to rely on similar considerations of the sacred and the sacrifice, as crucial for the foundation and functioning of the collective life. Nevertheless, while Paz situates the sacrificial ritual at the origin of the community, which should not be repressed, but rather comprehended in order to prevent the repetition of the ritual that inflicts this wound, Bataille believes that this open wound binds the community (Bataille, et al. "The School of Sociology," in *The College of Sociology (1937-39)*.) Bataille's influence on Paz's work regarding eroticism has been studied. For instance, see Ubilluz, *Sacred Eroticism: Georges Bataille and Pierre Klossowski in the Latin American Erotic Novel*. However, still waiting, following the path that Santí has opened up, is a rigorous research on the intimate dialogue that seem to emerge between Paz and Bataille.

their history as a ritual, which is nourished by mythical forces that they still do not comprehend. Paz thinks that the sacrificial ritual is at the origin of the community. It is an original wound that then has been inflicted cyclically under the cult of the pyramid and sacrifice. His aim is not to close this wound, but rather to dissolve the repression that provokes the reenactment of the ritual that inflicts it. People must understand the meaning of this deadly circle in order to create a new way of living together, supporting the political regimes that can prevent the repetition of this cycle.

Thus, Paz considers that the development of critical thought is crucial for society at large, because it can provide the tools that people need to project an alternative future. It can teach them to distinguish the specters and nightmares, which are nourished by an old mythology, to perceive their actual reality and change it. This should be role of intellectuals in contemporary Mexican society. They should develop a critical view of the past, a serious critique of the pyramidal model, which entails a moral and political critique of the present. They should undermine the structure of a bureaucratic regime that not only favors the recurrence of the sacrificial ritual, but also the political monopoly of the state and of the economic system. Paz claims to advocate for new and effective forms to exert democratic control over the political and economic powers, and on the media and the education system. How then it will be possible to configure this political regime as an alternative model to the cult of the pyramid and the sacrificial ritual? What are the regimes that Paz actually supports and which may be an example of his alternative political project? How will be possible to conceive a social model of development that reconciles the people with the past, situates them in their present, and projects them to an alternative future?

In line with Yvon Grenier's and Maarten van Delden's studies, I believe that Paz' work can provide an acute understanding of the fundamental dilemmas of contemporary politics.[213] Furthermore, as I mentioned in the previous section, I believe that his conception of poetry reflects profound contradictions that are intrinsic to politics, and perhaps through his poetic intuition he captures the ambivalence of politics. After I address the questions formulated above through Grenier's and Delden's studies, I will then conclude the present chapter by articulating a different framework for analyzing the solution that Paz provides for contemporary politics. Paz' political thought is inspired by two rival European intellectual movements: the Enlightenment and Romanticism. Thus Grenier calls his political thought "Romantic liberalism," which does not posit a political theory, much less a political program, but rather a constellation of ideas for thinking about politics (76).

Paz uses liberal values and practices (liberty, progress, equality, universalism, capitalism) as independent concepts to judge and evaluate the political realm and the development of society, without assuming a fixed position to provide his critical perspectives. Thus he seems sometimes to be engulfed in contradictions. He criticizes liberalism and modernity, but his critiques are from a moral and philosophical point of view which relies on liberal values and practices. For instance, Paz says: "[…] aunque la democracia liberal es un método, el mejor que conocemos, de covivencia social y de gobierno, no tiene respuestas para las preguntas esenciales que nos hacemos los seres humons" [even though liberal democracy is a method—it is the best that we know of social coexistence and government—it does not provide us with all the answers to the essential questions that human beings ask ourselves] (231).[214] Nevertheless, despite of this

[213] See Grenier, *From Art to Politics. Octavio Paz and the Persuit of Freedom*. Also see the book that Ven Delden and Grenier write together *Gunshot at the Fiesta*, specially the chapter "From Poetry to Politics."
[214] See Paz, "Un escritor mexicano ante la unión Soviética," 231.

lack of answers, he still believes that liberal democracy is the best political regime, because it opens up a space for dialogue and participation that are fundamental to develop critical thought, which should address the contradictions generated within this political and economic system.[215]

The fundamental core of Paz's political thought is the idea of the free individual. Paz believes that individual liberty should be assumed as an attitude for facing life, that developing critical thought can exert democratic control over the State, the political parties, institutions and the market. Of course, as Grenier points out, "Paz did not pay too much attention to the physical and historical conditions that probably made the realization of democratic values feasible […]" (91). Nevertheless his romantic view does not prevent him from getting financial support and sponsorship from the richest corporations in the country. For instance, he actively collaborates with the pro-government television channel Televisa, created in 1955. He appears in documentaries on his work and also uses this platform to provide his comments on public issues. Paz has defended his participation, arguing that it is a strategic positioning to intervene in the cultural life and public milieu. He claims that he has never lost his freedom to say and do what he wanted to, even if this implied going against the government interest.[216]

However it will be really hard to reconcile the idea of the poet as a furtive sniper who is breaking into enemy territory, seeking a conceal spot to carry out his intervention, whith Paz' positioning in the public arena. Following Paz' trajectory as a public intellectual, it seems that his critical intellectual work becomes functional to his personal interests and positioning in the cultural milieu. As has been pointed out, after he definitely returns to Mexico in the 1970s, he

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[215] In his Nobel lecture, Paz says: "[…] el triunfo de la economía de mercado—un triunfo por *défault*—no puede ser únicamente motivo de regocijo. El mercado es un mecanismo eficaz pero, como todos los mecanismo, ni tiene conciencia y tampoco misericordia." See "In search of the present" (263).
[216] For an interesting analysis on Paz's positioning as a public intellectual. See Garnier, "The Other voice," in *From Art to Politics. Octavio Paz and the Persuit of Freedom*.

has been deeply engaged in the struggles for cultural hegemony, while forming closed communities of intellectuals that fight to seize control of the cultural milieu. He has criticized the *Nexos* group precisely because it has forged an alliance with the state and sought to gain control over the content of a TV channel, while he has forged similar alliances, and used a TV channel closely linked to the P.R.I. to position his persona. In sum, Paz reproduces the same practices that he criticizes. As a "cacique" in the cultural milieu, he seeks to extend his hegemony, and his intellectual production sustains this project.

By the 1980s Paz becomes the leading liberal thinker in Mexico. Van Delden points out that Paz' political thought converges in the "liberal solution" for Mexico (124). Paz considers that there are not alternatives other than democratic capitalism. Thus he publicly supports the successive administrations of the P.R.I.'s presidents: Miguel de la Madrid, Carlos Salinas de Gortari, and Ernesto Zedillo.[217] He particularly endorses Gortari's administration which implements neoliberal reforms that Paz considers decisive for the development of the country.[218] Nevertheless, Paz's neoliberal apologia of capitalism does not provide answers to his crucial concerns regarding the cyclical recurrence of the sacrificial ritual. In *El Laberinto de la Soledad*, he claims that neoliberal regimes dispose of lives and bodies. He asserts that capitalism transforms human beings into objects or instruments. However, he would probably say that despite these contradictions, this economic and political regime opens up spaces for democratic dialogue and participation, which create mechanisms to control how living conditions are preserved.

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[217] These presidency administrations were: Miguel de la Madrid (1982-1988) Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988-1994), and Ernesto Zedillo (1994-2000).
[218] See Paz, *Itinerario*, 252.

Paz criticizes the P.R.I's bureaucratic structure when it visibly presides over life and death, as in the execution of the Tlatelolco massacre. He puts under severe scrutiny the power and sovereignty of the party as it publically disposes of the lives of the students, while the students' movement did not represent an imminent thread, but rather the vindication of democratic values aiming to change political structures and not to subvert them. For Paz the violent reaction of the government condenses an old mythology, as has been explained, and the underdevelopment of the Mexican political system, which cannot encompass the changes that have taken place at the level of the civil society. Thus, he defends the society's right to create the democratic institutions that can ensure and develop life in the social body. As a counterpart of the power that is arbitrarily exerted by a bureaucratic political structure, Paz believes that the power of the society and the free market can exert a positive influence on life. This is the threshold that the Mexican society must cross to achieve a comprehensive development.

Michel Foucault has precisely mapped how in modern societies these major shifts that Paz encourages have actually occurred to transform power since the nineteenth century.[219] The power to decide over life and death that the sovereign exerted through the state apparatus until the late eighteenth century assumes new forms. It becomes a disciplinary power (the prison is the ultimate example of this form of power), and a biopower or biopolitics, which institutionalizes sexuality, and administrates and controls the biological life of the population. Foucault writes: "[…] the existence in question is not longer the juridical existence of sovereignty; at stake is the biological existence of a population" (137).[220] Liberalism is the general context for bipolitics, but liberalism and neoliberalism are not ideologies. They are particular forms that the state assumes

[219] See Foucault, "Right of Death and Power over Life," in *The History of Sexuality*, also *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1977-78*, and *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1978-79*.
[220] See Foucault, "Right of Death and Power over Life," in *The History of Sexuality*.

to govern, which limit the power of the state in relation to two independent fields: the political economy and the legal system. Liberalism invests these fields with the authority to create norms and configure their own mechanism to exert control over the population.[221]

Death becomes the limit of the power of the state. It is unbearable for modern societies to accept that the state exerts its power to cause death, unless there is an imminent threat against the social body. Death is not longer under the domain of the sovereign, but rather under the orbit of the civil society. Foucault argues that death becomes a secret aspect in modern societies, "the most private," and the collective rituals, which used to be celebrated for instance during the execution of capital punishment, wane down (138).[222] The new forms that power assumes, through the domains of the political economy and the legal system, foster life and, surreptitiously, also disallow the means and material conditions that make life possible.

However, biopower presents itself as capable of administering life, optimizing the resources of the society to multiply it, and subjecting the individuals' biological life to precise control and comprehensive regulations to achieve this end, which is an indispensable element for the development of capitalism. In order to adjust bodies to theses new legal and economic processes of circulation it was necessary not only to create institutions capable of disciplining legal subjects, but also to subsume their biological life into the order of knowledge and power. The biological life of living beings entered into the sphere of the political techniques that can secure the flow of bodies to feed the capitalist machinery. Foucault writes: "[i]t is not longer a matter of bringing death into play in the field of sovereignty, but of distributing the living in the

[221] See Foucault's second lecture in *The Birth of Biopolitics*.
[222] See Foucault, "Right of Death and Power over Life," in *The History of Sexuality*.

domain of value and utility" (144). [223] It was not an attempt to limit the thread of death, but rather a process of taking charge of life.

Paz' liberal solution is a biopolitical solution. He supports neoliberal reforms because they take charge of life. The legal system establishes the norms that distribute bodies and capacities, and the political economy organizes the social body according to the ideas of efficiency and production. Nevertheless, the most important aspect for Paz will be that neoliberalism, as the context for bipolitics, makes death a calculate consequence, rather than an abrupt manifestation that wounds the social body and disrupts the necessary circulation of bodies. Paz perceives the contradictions inherent in this economic and political system. He claims that it cannot provide all the answers. However somehow he considers that this regime also provides the conditions to reconcile these contradictions, even the contradiction of life and death. He thinks that, like poetry and the poetic experience, it could reconcile antithetical forces, a destructive and a creative power. Biopolitics may be thought through Heraclitus' fragment 115: "[t]he name of the bow is life, but its work is death." Biopolitics presents itself as fostering life, while its work is death. Under Paz' view neoliberalism creates life, his tragic blind spot is the violence and destruction that it has to exert in order to preserve the life of a few.

[223] See Foucault, Ibid.

Conclusion

Macedonio's cultural and literary project, a conspiracy that he conceived with a group of friends at the beginning of the 1920s—along with his political philosophy and theory of the state—projects a superior order that he aims to actualize in the real world. This dream is not entirely determined by the real. Nevertheless, as I have demonstrated, it reproduces and uses certain mechanisms of the socio-economic base and other structures of power of its time. Macedonio appropriates these mechanisms to plan an intervention in his milieu. Thus, his literary and intellectual work reflects the material conditions in which he is inscribed and, at the same time, it reflects the conditions that he aims to strike at and subvert. In this sense, it is interesting to consider the view that he takes regarding the consolidation of power in the modern democratic-bureaucratic state, to which he bears witness at the beginning of the twentieth century. As has also been pointed out here, Macedonio shares with Kafka a particular sensibility with which to perceive the new mechanisms being configured to discipline and manipulate the masses.

Macedonio tackles the notion of how a modern political regime, no longer invoking aristocratic values or the power of an oligarchy to legitimize its power, dominates its citizens by creating a fictional narrative that relies on the idea of the democratic participation and the equality of all people. Macedonio perceives that political power uses this fictional narrative to impose its will on the people, while the people believe that they are represented by a democratic political regime. Max Weber defines this type of domination exerted through a democratic political regime, writing:

> To be more specific, *domination* will thus mean the situation in which the manifested will (*command*) of the *ruler* or rulers is meant to influence the conduct of one or more others (*the ruled)* and actually does influence it in such a way that their conduct to a socially relevant degree occurs as if the ruled had made the content of the command the maxim of their conduct for its very own sake. (946)

Museo de la Novela de la Eterna is conceived to unveil how political power exerts this form of domination. As the readers of the novel are captured as both fictional characters and as members of the community of conspirators, so they will realize that their actual lives are also ruled and dominated by other fictional stories. The illusion of equality and political participation leads the people to voluntarily delegate their individual power and will, without knowing they are enthralled by a world of fiction. Macedonio aims to demonstrate, however, that fiction can also create an emancipated community.

Borges' writings about secret societies, sects, groups of conspirators, and brotherhoods, heading into the 1940s, reflects others characteristics of modern states that did not have any antecedents. The plan of the secret societies operating in "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," seems to be a response to the rise of totalitarian regimes in Europe. Borges understands that totalitarian regimes can move beyond their national borders and domestic policies, and transform the international domain and foreign policy in a larger battlefield. These totalitarian movements can vanquish nations and, as they annex them, they can suspend a nation's laws to impose a universal law. Hannah Arendt asserts that these regimes can break down a whole society's structure of morality, "the whole body of commands and prohibitions which had traditionally translated and embodied the fundamental ideas of freedom and justice into terms of social relationships an

political institutions" (328).[224] For Borges, totalitarian movements epitomize the ultimate threat to the individual, as they erase the distinction between public and private life, and enforce absolute domination of a single conception of mankind.

A totalitarian government, such as the Nazi regime, defies the laws, but this is not necessarily illegal. Totalitarian regimes pretend to obey and exert the laws of History and Nature. They assume that these are the sources of authority that invest them with the legitimacy to shape humanity. Arendt explains that all laws, under such totalitarian regimes, become tools with which to fulfill the goal of giving birth to a new kind of humanity. But these laws are not based on reason. Rather, they use Nature and History as propelling forces to justify the violence that the regime unleashes, scorching humanity and dragging down individuals. The totalitarian terror eliminates singular identities for the sake of the species; "it sacrifices men for the sake of mankind" (342).

However, Arendt points out that the violent movement of totalitarian regimes can be hindered. She writes: "With each new birth, a new beginning is born into the world, and a new world has potentially come into being. The stability of laws, erecting the boundaries and the channels of communication between men who live together and act in concert, hedges in this new beginning and assures, at the same time its freedom […]" (342). In the short story "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius" (1940), which the narrator dates to 1940, Borges predicts in a postscript dated 1947 (although it was written and included in the original text) that a generation of new men, a scattered community of scientists, astrologists, engineers, artists, and intellectuals, will be able to conceive a new order. Borges conjures the totalitarian regime's limits, as he imagines the coming into being of a new order based on reason that will sweep over the entire world.

[224] See Arendt "On the Nature of Totalitarianism: An Essay in Understanding."

In “The Lottery of Babylon” we can perceive the formation of a despotic regime. In this short story, Borges portrays the birth of a clandestine organization in which merchants participate in order to appropriate the power of the state. The story does not only illuminate the secret mechanisms that the state uses to control subjects and bodies, but also exposes the alliance between capitalism and the state. Behind the lottery in Babylon there are commercial and economic interests at stake. Borges provides an acid critique when he writes that the poor people are finally allow to participate in the drawings, but that their free participation is another mechanism to ensure the continuity of the State-Company’s enterprise. In the story, this alliance between the State and capitalism is depicted as a necessary consequences of the socio-economic system that the Company represents. This alliance also reveals the necessity to create state agencies ranging from the secret service to bureaucratic agencies in charge of the drawing, the distribution of punishments, and the execution of sentences, as well as the creation of new laws, in order to perpetuate the dominant position of the members of the Company.

Alfonso Reyes’s intellectual and cultural work also responds to the vicissitudes of the formation of the state. In the 1910s, as has been explored, he participates in a restricted community of intellectuals that challenges the organic intellectuals of the *porfirian* regime. By the 1940s, his cultural and intellectual project for the Latin American intelligentsia encompasses the volatile national and international social and political scenarios. When he finally returns to Mexico in 1939, he faces the challenge of a national state that, though it still keeps close ties with certain intellectual circles, clearly moves toward a configuration in which intellectuals are no longer included in the decision-making process. In a historical context in which utopian projects still could mobilize the masses to erupt and reconfigure social and political structures,

Reyes focuses on the formation of cultural and literary institutions that can guard the superior forms of knowledge that he believes should determine the ideal order for the continent.

George Simmel analyzes the formation of secret organizations created to protect certain types of knowledge and to control who can and cannot gain access to these sources of knowledge. He writes:

> […] concerning techniques of keeping secrets, it must not be forgotten that the secret is not only a means under whose protection the material purposes of a group may be furthered: often, conversely, the very formation of a group is designed to guarantee the secrecy of certain contents. This occurs in the special type of secret societies whose substance is a secret doctrine, some theoretical, mystical, or religious knowledge. Here secrecy is its own sociological purpose: certain insights must not penetrate into the masses; those who know form a community in order to guarantee mutual secrecy to one another. (355)

The exclusive intellectual elite that Reyes envisions functions as the secret society that Simmel depicts. Reyes creates cultural and literary institutions that function as an umbrella to protect the secret knowledge that they conceal from the masses. This is Reyes' attempt to intervene in his social and cultural milieu. Nevertheless, it also marks the scope and limits of his project, which will not find a way to articulate through the power of the state a cultural and educational program that could teach the values that should guide the collective life.

Octavio Paz is convinced of the impossibility of articulating through the power of the state an emancipatory political project. He sees the progressive decline of the power of intellectuals to actually intervene in a collective political project, just as he perceives the impossibility of the state actually enforcing an alternative political project to oppose domination. On the one hand, the petrified structure of the Mexican bureaucratic state and, on the other, the impossibility of continuing to view the people as political actors who could intervene in the political arena—or who could be even politically represented—lead Paz to conceive intellectuals as members of a brotherhood of solitary snipers.

Nevertheless, I believe that this tactic and the strategic positioning that Paz proposes for intellectuals also reflect the profound transformation that, following the 1950s, he seems to perceive of the power of capitalist states and of the mechanisms of power. In "Posdata," he writes about the evolution of the capitalist state as he addresses the fusion of the North American State and the military complex:

> …no se trata de la dominación del Estado por grupos financieros y económicos sino de la emergencia de formaciones casi institucionales que, por el control de los medios económicos, militares y políticos, se proponen una política de dominación nacional y/o munidal. No la supeditación de la política y del Estado a los intereses financieros de una minoría sino más bien el monopolio de la economía y del Estado por grupos y sistemas en los cuales son ya indistinguibles los intereses financieros de los políticos y ambos de los militares (271).

Even though Paz is thinking here about the specific case of a modern capitalist state, I believe that he uses some of the premises that he introduces in this quote to understand the configuration of the Mexican state and the new configurations of the mechanisms of power and domination, which in this case are not related to military interests.

As it has been already argued, Paz claims that the Mexican state has a rigid monolithic structure exclusively controlled by the P.R.I., which prevents democratic participation. He also writes that in this bureaucratic apparatus there is the rise of a technocratic class. Nevertheless, he does not seem to believe that these technocrats respond either to their own class interests or to the interests of the state. Paz realizes that the bureaucratic state and the party are in crisis. They have lost their own identities and cannot fulfill the goals that they claim to defend. The web of economic and financial interests that the elite extends through the state's apparatus and the media penetrates all through the structures of power. The state and the party cannot represent or mediate between different interests that struggle against one another and overlap.

Paz believes that the role of the state should be limited to that of a simple administrator of economic interests that would ensure the free circulation of bodies and goods that would nourish the economic system. Facing these transformations of his milieu, Paz rethinks the positioning of artists and intellectuals. His project maps these profound changes. For instance, in the 1970s he already recognized the crucial role that the media would play in the development of his career. Artists and intellectuals must become marketing agents and learn how to use the new channels of communication, even though this would imply their collaboration with the most powerful economic groups, which are themselves closely linked to politicians. The scattered community of artists and intellectuals that Paz imagines corresponds with his tactic to insert himself and his closed group of intellectuals into this new scenario.

Would it be possible to imagine nowadays the formation of secret societies of intellectuals and exclusive intellectual elites such as those that Macedonio, Borges, and Reyes envisioned to reshape the social and cultural milieu? The decline of the power of the State as a main actor, which structured the cultural milieu and represented either a threat for intellectuals or the means through which they thought it possible to articulate an alternative community, suggests that it will no longer be possible to imagine secret groups that dwell in the fissures of society to plan conspiracies to assault the centers of power. Paz may be right when he announces that we bear witness to the end of the sect of poets. Closed groups of writers and intellectuals, the exclusive network of publishing houses and agents, the circuits of loyalties, kinships, and reverences are and will be always working. One only needs to attend an important book fair or try to gain access to the circles of intellectuals who control educational institutions to see this binarizing system of inclusion and exclusion at work. However, perhaps there will always be within these circles double agents who have infiltrated them and, while pretending to reproduce their logic, hatch with others alternative communities of artists and intellectuals.

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